**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/2022/06/horticulture-raccoons-in-sweet-corn.html**

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**Got raccoons?**

These mischievous mammals likely have a taste for Kansas sweet corn

*By Annika Wiebers, K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Kansas State University horticulture expert Ward Upham casts a leery eye to a sometimes-naughty creature that has its eye on homeowner’s gardens.

“It seems the official sweet corn inspector,” he said, “should be the raccoon, as they seem to harvest the sweet corn the day before it is to be picked.”

Upham, who is also coordinator of K-State’s Horticulture Rapid Response Center, said many Kansas gardeners have trouble with these mischievous mammals stealing produce -- especially sweet corn -- before it can be harvested. His suggestion: Use electric or chain-link fencing to thwart the raccoon’s efforts.

Upham said an electric fence for raccoons needs to be configured a bit differently than one for cattle. The same wiring and fence posts can be used, he notes, but the wires themselves must be much closer together than fences for cattle.

He recommends a minimum of two wires, with the lowest wire no more than five inches off the ground and a maximum of four inches between each additional wire.

“It is much easier to use woven electric wire with strands of wire embedded than to use a solid metal wire,” Upham said. “The woven wire is easier to bend around corners and to roll up when done for the year.”

He also favors battery operated fences over the plug-in variety: “The battery-operated types allow more versatility where corn is grown,” he said.

To be effective, the electrical current should be turned on well before the corn ripens because raccoons will be much more difficult to deter once they have stolen a taste.
“Check the wire occasionally to make sure you have current,” Upham said. “Weeds can intercept the voltage if they touch a wire, (allowing) raccoons entry.”

Upham recommends purchasing a voltage tester to measure the current.

For gardeners who prefer a less shocking solution to raccoon intrusions, Upham suggests a chain link or kennel fence. He cautions users of this method to ensure that there are no gaps large enough for raccoons to squeeze through, and even recommends putting fencing over the top of the enclosure to prevent raccoons from climbing in that way.

Upham and his colleagues in K-State’s Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources produce a weekly Horticulture Newsletter with tips for maintaining home landscapes. The newsletter is available to view online or can be delivered by email each week.

Interested persons can also send their garden- and yard-related questions to Upham at wupham@ksu.edu, or contact your local K-State Research and Extension office.

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

K-State Research and Extension local offices, www.ksre.k-state.edu/about/stateandareamaps.html

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