



Goose Management

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LANDSCAPE MODIFICATION

Geese prefer:

Kentucky Bluegrass
Brome Grass
Canary Grass
Colonial Bentgrass
Timothy
Perennial Ryegrass
Perennial Bent Grass.
Quackgrass.
Red Fescue.
White Clover

Geese do not prefer:

Mature Tall Fescue
Periwinkle
Myrtle
Pachysandra
English Ivy
Orchard Grass
Hosta or Plantain Lily
Ground Juniper
Switch Grass

The following is an excerpt from HUMANE GOOSE-CONTROL SOLUTIONS by PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS:

Though it may require the largest financial and labor outlay initially, making the area less attractive to geese is the most effective long-term solution—and should be the most cost effective one too. Rather than devoting money and human resources to removing geese from an area only to have them come back each year, a properly managed habitat modification plan will keep geese numbers down permanently. The modifications can be made gradually while using the following methods to keep geese away from the area:

- Reduce the food supply.
- Reduce the sense of security that geese have in the area.
- Reduce the ability of the geese to move easily between land and water.
- Reduce the available nesting sites.
- Provide alternate foraging areas.

REDUCE THE FOOD SUPPLY

This is achieved by reducing the size of the area within which the geese feed and by making the food there less palatable. The best way to achieve these two objectives is to replace grass with plants that geese won't want to eat. Resident geese typically prefer to feed on short, frequently mowed and fertilized Kentucky bluegrass. Replacing bluegrass with tall fescue, prairie plantings, English ivy, wildflowers, common periwinkle, Japanese pachysandra, or similar

ground coverings will discourage feeding. The grass can also be made less attractive to geese by decreasing the amount of young shoots. Increasing the height of the lawn to at least 6 inches and making the grass less nutritious by leaving the lawn unfertilized and unwatered—allowing it to become “naturalized”—will discourage geese from feeding and cut maintenance costs.

REDUCE THE SENSE OF SECURITY

Canada geese are most comfortable when they are able to scan their surroundings for predators. Reduce the size of the lawn or break it up with low shrubs and vegetation until geese no longer feel safe while grazing. Geese prefer a “sight line”—the distance to the nearest potential hiding place for predators—of at least 30 feet. Break up that sight line, and geese won’t linger. Plantings should be kept low enough so that humans can still enjoy the area but should be at least 30 inches tall. Long grasses or shrubs will suffice—the important factor is that the arrangements be dense or staggered so that gaps are not available. (Geese can move through gaps as small as 3 inches wide.) If you plant arrangements that are at least 20 to 30 feet wide, it is possible to retain shoreline access for humans by way of a narrow, winding footpath while still breaking up the sight line of the geese. A complementary technique for reducing the sense of security for geese is to create not only visual barriers, but also to create physical barriers between land and water. Hedges and shrubs, fences, or boulders, either by themselves or used together, will make a site less attractive to geese. Tall grasses and shrubs are effective but must be planted densely to avoid creating an area that is conducive to nesting.

Another way to restrict access to water is by planting native aquatic vegetation, such as varieties of sedge, bulrushes, reedgrasses, and mannagrasses, to prevent geese from being able to move quickly in and out of the water. This plant barrier should be a few feet wide. It will be enjoyed by other waterfowl and will provide a nursery for fish. If creating an aquatic plant barrier is not possible because of underwater contours, cutting and filling can achieve a stable substrate in artificial lakes and ponds.

REDUCE THE AVAILABLE NESTING SITES

The first and easiest step to take in reducing potential nesting sites is to remove any artificial nesting structures such as tubs, elevated platforms, or any round, depressed container. Next, eliminate islands and peninsulas, and break up any straight shorelines with shrubs or boulders as described above to reduce the sense of security. Any disruption or alteration of nesting sites should be completed well before nesting season. It is easier to eliminate islands or peninsulas when a human-built lake or pond is in its planning stage. For established human-built water bodies, islands can be removed when the water is drained for maintenance, or the water level can be permanently adjusted to either submerge the islands or connect them to the shore. Other water bodies may be altered using the additional techniques described here, but note that modifying some protected waterways may require an Army Corps of Engineers permit.

PROVIDE ALTERNATE FORAGING AREAS Geese will resist moving from an area if they are not given an alternative. If an area is set aside nearby that provides geese with the opportunity to rest and forage without interference, they will favor that site over a location where they are impeded, excluded, and harassed. Therefore, an important element of any IGM is to set aside areas where geese are welcome and have access to water, feeding opportunities, and good sight lines, with little human interference.