

What to do about rodent damage on shrubs...

When the snow melts, new horrors might be revealed. Rodent damage after a harsh winter can be devastating. Only certain types of damage will kill a shrub, in which case a replacement may or may not be needed. Some landscapes are slightly overplanted to achieve fullness without waiting, so down the road to lose one out of fourteen junipers won't be the end of the world.

If the entire base of the shrub is completely girdled at every branch and stem and it is an evergreen, then it will eventually die. If it is a deciduous shrub, cut back all damaged branches and it should re-sprout from the bottom. Mice are the best at this type of girdling; they hide under snow banks and feed on your favorite ornamentals, eating all the bark and cambium. The cambium is what keeps plants alive; they are the conducting vessels of water and nutrients. So while even though there is still a stem, it is in fact strangled.

Rabbits on the other hand nip stems off at a diagonal to eat or can make a nice burrow, usually in sheared yews. They usually eat deciduous shrubs. This type of damage also sprouts back from the bottom or off the cut ends.

It is always a good idea to fence off new plants and water in the fall to encourage establishment. Chicken wire will work on rabbits, but not on mice. Hardware cloth will work on mice, but it needs to be high enough in case of snow banks or drifts.



Example of mouse damage