



Armadillos cause problems in the landscape

The armadillo is one of the more interesting native mammals in Oklahoma. They like to feast on insects, grubs and earthworms. Unfortunately, they can cause substantial damage to lawns as they search for their food in the soil.

They also dig up shallowly rooted annuals in flower beds. While they can cause damage all year long, it's generally most pronounced in the summer months as lawns are irrigated, which makes foraging in the soil easier. Armadillo damage is easy to identify as it is noted by multiple shallow holes. Damage to rhizomatous grasses such as Bermuda is typically manageable as healthy grass can quickly fill in bare patches.

However, cool season grasses, such as fescue, are more problematic as the bare patches will need to be reseeded in the fall. Additionally, the extra irrigation required by cool season grasses in the Oklahoma summer make them especially attractive to armadillo. The armadillo requires nearby habitat that is generally woody thickets. The armadillo, which is a burrowing creature, prefers loose soils. Here's an interesting tidbit – armadillos are the only mammals besides humans who are known to become infected with leprosy. While the probability of infections is likely low, it's not recommended to handle armadillos with bare skin.

Armadillos aren't protected in Oklahoma and may be trapped or shot year around. Trapping is highly effective using a large 10 x 12 x 32-inch live catch trap. Select a trap with doors on either end. Use some type of barrier to funnel the armadillo into the trap. Existing barriers such as fences or walls will work. If no existing barrier exists, use boards or temporary fence. The barrier only needs to be a few inches tall as armadillos rarely climb and will typically forage along any barrier they encounter.

The trap doesn't need to be baited, although some homeowners have had success with rotten fruit or eggs. Place the trap either in the area of the landscape where damage is pronounced or where, if known, the armadillos are entering the landscape. As armadillos are often attracted to freshly irrigated lawns, consider placing traps in an area of the lawn immediately after irrigation. Reducing irrigation can reduce damage, but it's important to meet the watering needs of the plants and lawn in your landscape.

Shooting is an effective method where legal. However, as they are primarily nocturnal, particularly during the summer, this may not be a realistic control. Most cities and towns have laws regarding discharging a firearm in city limits.

If damage is frequent, you can assume the animal has a burrow nearby in a wooded or riparian area. Once trapped, it is NOT legal to move the armadillo to another location. Transporting animals presents many problems such as disease transmission, displacement of existing wildlife and stress on the animal moved. Therefore, any trapped armadillo should be humanely killed with a shot to the base of the neck or in the head. Don't handle the armadillo in an effort to reduce potential of leprosy transmission.

Habitat modification such as removing protective brush is another way to reduce armadillo damage. However, this will change the aesthetics of the property and reduce use by many other species of wildlife that the gardener may wish to attract.

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