

Bigger than bugs: Dealing with rabbits and rodents without chemicals



Many of the issues that arise in gardening are related to bugs, but this year we discuss the challenges presented by the burgeoning populations of rabbits and rats.

The focus of the Life-Friendly Garden Tour is reducing the use of chemical pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides. This includes second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs). When poisoned rats are caught and eaten by owls, hawks, and other predators, SGARs accumulate in their bodies, ultimately killing them as well. Dogs and outdoor cats are also at risk.

Instead of using chemicals, begin by blocking rodents from access to food in your garden.

- Rabbit damage to tender plants can be prevented with simple hardware cloth or chicken wire cages.
- Rats can feed on birdseed, fallen fruits or vegetables, garbage, compost piles, and even pet feces. Food sources like these need to be cleaned up or secured.

What does Watertown do?

The City of Watertown does not use the SGARs which threaten owls, hawks, and other predators that eat rats. Where bait boxes are deemed necessary on public property, the City places boxes containing TERAD3, which delivers an overdose of Vitamin D3.

For more information, please visit the Health Department's Rodent Control Page
<https://www.watertown-ma.gov/627/Rodent-Control>



What can I do?

Residents of Watertown are joining Mass Audubon in a state-wide effort to protect owls, hawks, and other predators by ending the use of SGARs. The group in Watertown is called

Save Watertown Wildlife

The goal is to make Watertown a safe place for these magnificent creatures so they can control rabbits and rats for us. To learn more, please email
savewatertownwildlife@gmail.com

Welcome to Watertown's 28th Life-Friendly Garden Tour

Sunday September 14, 2025

Open Gardens:
10 am to 2 pm

All garden visitors and hosts are invited to attend the

Social Hour:

2 to 3:30 pm at

Arsenal Park Community Garden

Rain Date September 21



Co-hosted by Watertown Community Gardens and Friends of Bees, a working group of Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice, and the Environment.

Gardens open 10 am to noon

Jacob Mirsky * 59 Bradford Road

Pollinator-focused garden filling every inch of soil.

Bruce Aguilar * 214 Lexington St,
Belmont

Native plants in three micro-climates, trees, shrubs, grasses, ferns and perennials.

Linda Relson * 23 Stuart Street

From flowering perennials in front, to a stately red oak anchoring a shade garden, and a pond out back, native plants support biodiversity with joy.

Gardens open noon to 2 pm

Xin Peng * 179 Edenfield Avenue

Both native and cultured plants provide food for humans. Continuous blooms provide food for pollinators including hummingbirds, and seeds for birds.

Marilyn Salvas *

Arsenal Park Community Garden

Newly-planted pollinator gardens, specifically planted to support Monarch butterflies, native bees, and native birds complement 40+ community garden plots growing food and flowers.

Gardens open 10 am to 2 pm

Sharon Bauer * 62 Pearl Street

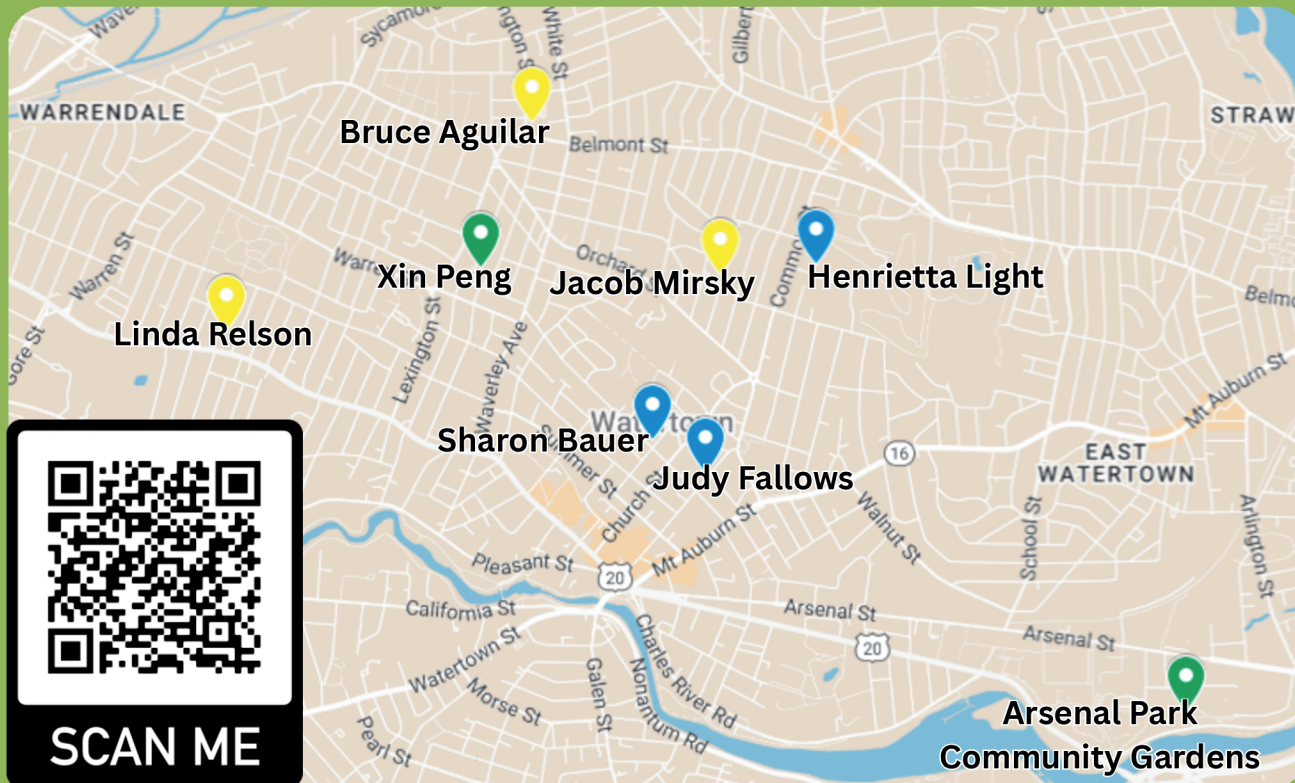
The variety of pollinators and nesting birds increases in my garden as the variety of native plants increases. Rabbits, rats and jumping worms are my unwelcome visitors -- but I've had some success managing each of them.

Judy Fallows * 52 Marshall Street

Ten fruit trees, grapes and berries, a few vegetables, bunnies, birds and a happy woodchuck family. We use a lot of sturdy small fences to protect crops.

Henrietta Light * 22 Grenville Road

The garden has become a meadow by nourishing the seeds that nature planted. Many trees, some of them still seedlings, are offering their services to wildlife: four oaks, an American elm, a Siberian elm, a wafer ash, three hickories and a black walnut.



On September 14, the gardens featured in this map will welcome visitors during the hours shown above.

After that, please be respectful and view their gardens from the street.

To view an online map, read the full descriptions, and access further resources, please scan the QR code above or visit

<https://watertowncitizens.org/working-groups/life-friendly-garden-tour/>