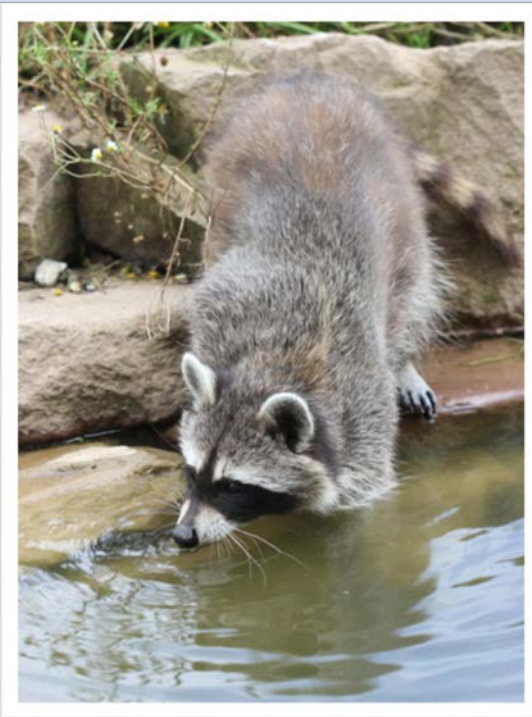


Raccoons in My Pond

I was awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of grunting. At first I was puzzled and then I thought of it: **Raccoons!** I leaped out of bed and from the balcony I saw them having a grand time; a mama coon with her four juveniles. They were wading and waddling over and in between the potted plants, turning them over looking for the mother lode. This pond is really shallow to display the plants that are for sale. I always put in a couple of goldfish to control the mosquitoes and that's what they were after.



Many pond owners have seen the evidence of a raccoon raid: pots on their sides, mangled plants and fish skeletons laying on the ground, but it is not often that you catch them in the act, since they are strictly nocturnal. So, I spent the next 5 minutes torn between my curiosity to observe them in action and wanting to save the plants from further devastation. Then I saw the mum's snout come up from the water with one of my plump goldfish in its mouth and no matter how interesting or cute they were I had to chase them away.

The best prevention is to design your pond with steep sides so they can't wade in, and keep in mind, they can't catch fish while swimming. The pond should also be wide enough (over 4 feet) so they can't reach in from the edge. Some folks feed their fish close to the edge with the ultimate goal of

getting the fish to eat out of their hand. This is cute, but not a good idea. I always make sure to throw the food in the middle of the ponds for that reason.

If the design of your pond is inviting to raccoons, there are still some other solutions to keep them out. The most secure is to drape a net over the pond, but this can take away from the looks. The motion activated "Scarecrow" gives them a good scare, or a low voltage electric fence will do the trick. For a more artistic look, use a copper pipe instead of wire.

This year I am going to use "Mosquito Dunks", instead of fish for my shallow display ponds. So, with all these measures in place, I can now sleep soundly knowing that my ponds are safe from the neighborhood bandits.