From Your Commissioner

Tails from the Garden

This year would have been my 40th year of planting a garden, but the year my daughter was born, my dad and I were behind schedule on building a room for her, so there was no garden that year. I have always liked having a garden, but I have never been able to get my mother or my wife to develop a great deal of enthusiasm for canning or freezing the excess produce. Hope springs eternal, so I always plant the same amount. The end result is that much goes to waste. Oh well, maybe someday...

Critters have often been a challenge, many of which I have figured out how to outsmart over the years, but in 2020 and 2021 I had to surrender and put up an electric fence. The woodchucks and the rabbits were taking over. The biggest problem was that I couldn’t grow any carrots, one of the four things that I grow, that can go into the root cellar.

While I never liked woodchucks, I did like having rabbits around, just not 20 or so of them. Last year a variety of predators took care of all of the woodchucks and most of the rabbits. The rabbit population is now nonexistent near my garden and any that take to the open space seem to disappear rather quickly.

The deer were a slight problem early on in the season and they quickly ate my lettuce, which I have never had much luck with anyhow. They never seemed to have bothered my corn. However, I have battled with the raccoons for years over the corn. I always joked that I planted half the corn for me and the other half for them. At any rate, I didn’t bother with the electric fence this year and until last Friday night, the garden was no worse for it. Then came the raccoons.

Many years ago my father had read that flashing colored Christmas lights kept the raccoons away, so I tried it. For several years that seemed to do the trick, until it didn’t. Since my garden is near the road, all those flashing red and blue lights made it look like an accident scene and the traffic slowed down, which was an added benefit

I don’t know if the raccoons got smarter over the years or they just built up a tolerance to lights, but at some point, the lights didn’t work anymore. I then had a new idea. I put a radio under the last of our old rat boxes we used in the hen houses and put it in between my two rows of corn. I never tried music, but I know that raccoons don’t like talk radio.

So, as I said, all was well and good this year until last Friday night when the raccoons came back. The strange thing about it was that they didn’t devastate the rows of corn; for the most part they were very careful not to knock down the stalks. Instead, they picked the ears off, much as we would, and then they sat around on the grass and had a picnic. I learned that even raccoons have family members who no one wants to socialize with, since there were two cobs left in the grass about 50 feet from the main party.

Needless to say, the radio is back on a timer, and it seems to be doing the trick. While I hope they stay away, I would have liked to have had a video of that family outing.

Shawn N. Jasper-Commissioner