

## *Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian*

### **Gremlins of the garden**



Cattails are great for fall arrangements.



Bindweed is a wicked weed resembling morning glory that must be eliminated.



A glittering pumpkin.

Photos Cynthia Brian

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These flying friends don't plague people, but they will devour a thousand mosquitoes in an hour. Provide habitat for these winged heroes to roost by erecting a bat house 12 to 15 feet off the ground. As a bonus to your garden, they'll offer nutrient-rich fertilizer with their excrement, guano. If you fear vampires, plant garlic.

#### **Snakes**

Snakes are slimy, slithering, and scary. But most snakes are harmless and helpful garden assistants. The common garter snake preys on insects, slugs, and rodents and prefers to live in cool, dark places. Keep your doors closed as it would be frightening to find that a female gave birth to up to 50 live young under your bed! The elegant kingsnake is welcome in any landscape as it eats venomous snakes like the rattlesnake or copperhead as well as rodents and other plant destroyers.

#### **Skunks**

Skunks are the garbage collectors of the garden. These docile black and white creatures will eat anything including insects, rodents, and yellow jacket larvae. When fruit falls from a tree, they'll be the clean-up crew. Pet food and birdseed are attractors. Because of their odorous spray, these mostly nocturnal, solitary, and non-confrontational creatures get a bad rap. When threatened, they'll stomp, hiss, and puff up

before raising their tail and unleashing their potent defense system.

#### **Spiders**

Little Miss Muffet had no reason to run away. Only unwanted insects such as grasshoppers, aphids, cockroaches, and mosquitoes need to fear these valuable web weavers. Research is underway by scientists on the benefits of spider venom to prevent arthritis while the strength of spider silk is inspiring mechanical engineers.

#### **The Beastly Bad**

##### **Gophers, Moles, Voles**

Although we witness the horror gophers, moles, and voles create in our lawns and yard, we rarely see these creeping critters. Stomping on the mounds, trails, and holes may distract them for a while, but like the Terminator, they'll be back. Setting multiple traps and checking them daily is the best method. If all else fails, call in the pros.

##### **Rats and Mice**

Rats and mice gnaw through wiring, wood, pipes, bags of birdseed, and make nests in our stored patio furniture pads. Reproducing rapidly and prolifically, rats spread disease, contaminate food sources, and infest our homes and gardens. In just three years, a single rat can produce half a billion descendants! Trapping is the humane manner to eradicate these pests unless the wicked witch of the West unleashes her feral black cats to hunt and exterminate. ... continued on Page D13