

Who Is Your Pest? Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel or Chipmunk?

by Lynne Brosch

Recently as I went around the lake doing talks on pest management, I had several complaints about chipmunks. People describe a lot of digging and eating of plants by these chipmunks. As I began thinking about putting out some information on how to handle the situation I thought about the golden-mantled ground squirrel, I watched eating garden plants voraciously on the Baldwin Estate grounds just yesterday. Perhaps gardeners need to know who they are dealing with.

The golden-mantled ground squirrel looks a lot like a chipmunk. It has a large white stripe bordered by black on each side. The main difference between this squirrel and a chipmunk is that its stripes don't go all the way to the face and it is a slightly larger animal. It lives along the west coast in coniferous forests and mountainous areas. It likes to eat plants, seeds, nuts, fruit and some insects. It lives in an underground burrow usually near trees or logs. Chipmunks have very similar burrows. Most common in the Tahoe basin is the Lodgepole chipmunk.

Fencing can be used to protect plants from squirrels and chipmunks, but has challenges in effectiveness because of the excellent digging and climbing skills exhibited by these garden pests. Hardware cloth may be used to exclude animals from flower beds with seeds and bulbs covered by the hardware cloth and all covered with soil. This method of prevention may prove less costly and time consuming than trapping.

The most successful method for control of ground squirrels and chipmunks is the use of traps. A tunnel-type tube trap can be used or a Conibear 110 trap. For best efficiency, traps should be set within a few feet of the burrow entrance and baited with nuts, melon rinds or orange slices. These traps should be baited but not set and the animals allowed to eat freely over several days. After the animals have become accustomed to taking the food then set the trap. Toxic baits are available to homeowners and should be used with caution, always following the label directions carefully. Any of these methods should only be used when the population of animals is unwieldy and the destruction is great. Since both squirrels and chipmunks hibernate, it may be best to wait them out to the end of the season. Chipmunks generally don't live more than one year. Destroy old burrows by ripping them apart, not just filling them in. You may also find that both the squirrels and chipmunks switch from eating plants to the seeds that become available later in

the season and that will give some relief to your plants. Keep in mind that if you have bird feeders you are also inviting these animals in to your property.

For more information:

Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel

<http://www.vpcrac.org/images/goldenmantledgrdsquirrelpart2peter.pdf>

http://www.blm.gov/ca/forms/wildlife/details.php?metode=serial_number&search=2612

http://www.ndow.org/Species/Furbearer/Golden-mantled_Ground_Squirrel/Ground_Squirrel_best_management_practices

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7438.html>

http://ucanr.org/sites/Ground_Squirrel_BMP/

Squirrel Wars: Backyard Wildlife Battles and How to Win Them. George H. Harrison. Willow Creek Press. 2000

Lodgepole Chipmunk

http://www.mnh.si.edu/mna/image_info.cfm?species_id=389

<http://icwdm.org/handbook/rodents/Chipmunks/ChipmunksControlMethods.aspx>