



Master Gardeners, Fresno County

# Living in the foothills...

Advice from Master Gardeners, Ray and Ruth Conner, Oakhurst, CA

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## Keeping Animals Out of Your Garden

Growing vegetables and flowers in the mountains has a lot of things in common with growing them in the valley. The plants need water, sun, and fertilizer.

In the Sierra foothills however, we have the problem of animals and birds that enjoy what we raise. Deer wander freely from yard to yard and can easily jump a six foot fence to get to the growing things. In addition there are gophers, ground squirrels, raccoons, rabbits, and several varieties of birds that drop by. Quail enjoy dust baths in the summer, and as they dig in the dirt, they uproot the new plants.

We use raised beds with hardware cloth lining the bottoms in our garden. Hardware cloth is a mesh made of firm metal that keeps the gophers from entering the bed from below.

The rest of the problem is controlling the birds and animals from above. We have found a PVC frame made into a box and covered with bird netting to be satisfactory. This device can be placed on the edges of the raised bed and provides adequate protection as shown in the picture. It is not advisable to have the protective frame sit on the ground, because ground squirrels and gophers can burrow inside the enclosure and crawl up under the net and enter the bed. The cover can easily be lifted from the bed for cultivation or harvest.



Net covering for raised beds—Photo by Ray Conner