

Squirrel Wars!

The Los Gatos Birdwatcher is here to help...

Eastern Grey squirrels are all over our area and love bird seed. In the Santa Cruz mountains, we have both Western and Eastern Greys, the Eastern Greys being more aggressive. They are very clever and very acrobatic and are able to leap 6-8 feet sideways, 4 feet from the ground and 9 feet from above. Squirrels also have a nasty habit of repetition. They will try and try and fail and fail, then they make it and never fail again.

Feeder Placement

Keep the squirrel's leaping ability in mind and place the feeders about eight feet away from tree trunks, fences, pergolas, shrubs, garden furniture – anything that a squirrel can use as a launch pad! The feeder is most protected from a leaping squirrel if it is at least four feet from the ground. Sometimes five feet is better if you have a good jumper!

Baffles

Baffles can be used for hanging, pole-mounted, or post-mounted feeders. They resemble large disks, cans or upside down salad bowls. A diameter of 16" to 20" is the most effective in keeping squirrels at bay. The smaller ones work better as rain guards. For pole and post-mounted feeders, baffles should be placed at least four feet off the ground, below the feeder, so that the squirrel can't leap over it from the ground. For hanging feeders, baffles work best if suspended above the feeder by

hook, wire, or chain. Avoid the use of nylon or cotton line due to the ease in which squirrels can chew through these materials. Protect the tree limb with a piece of plastic tubing (just ask, we have plenty).

Squirrel-proof Feeders

Many of the tube feeders available have metal perches and ports so that the squirrels can't destroy the feeder even if they can access them. These are considered "squirrel resistant." An excellent style of squirrel-proof feeders (meaning that even if they get on the feeder, they can't get at the seed) that are very attractive to our perching birds is the "Squirrel Buster" series which closes off the seed when a squirrel comes from the top or bottom. Coming in Mini, Classic or Plus sizes, these feeders fit all situations. The "Selective" series by Duncraft prevent squirrels and larger birds such as jays and pigeons from hogging the seed by encasing the tube in a 1-1/2" x 1-1/2" mesh cage. The "All Weather Feeder with Cage" works well to keep squirrels and large birds out and also protects the seed from rain. The cage allows the smaller birds to get even closer to the seed.

Bribery and other tactics

Providing squirrels their own feeder with dried corn, peanuts, striped sunflower or Nature's Trail Mix has been shown in some instances to discourage squirrels from feeders.

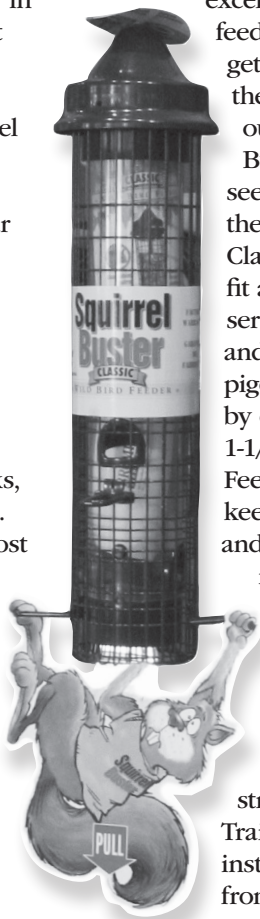


Another product that works on the pole is called "Squirrel Slip" which is a soy-based product that prevents squirrels from getting a grip on the pole. Since it is soy-based, and not petroleum-based, it is safer for all concerned but it does have to be reapplied frequently.

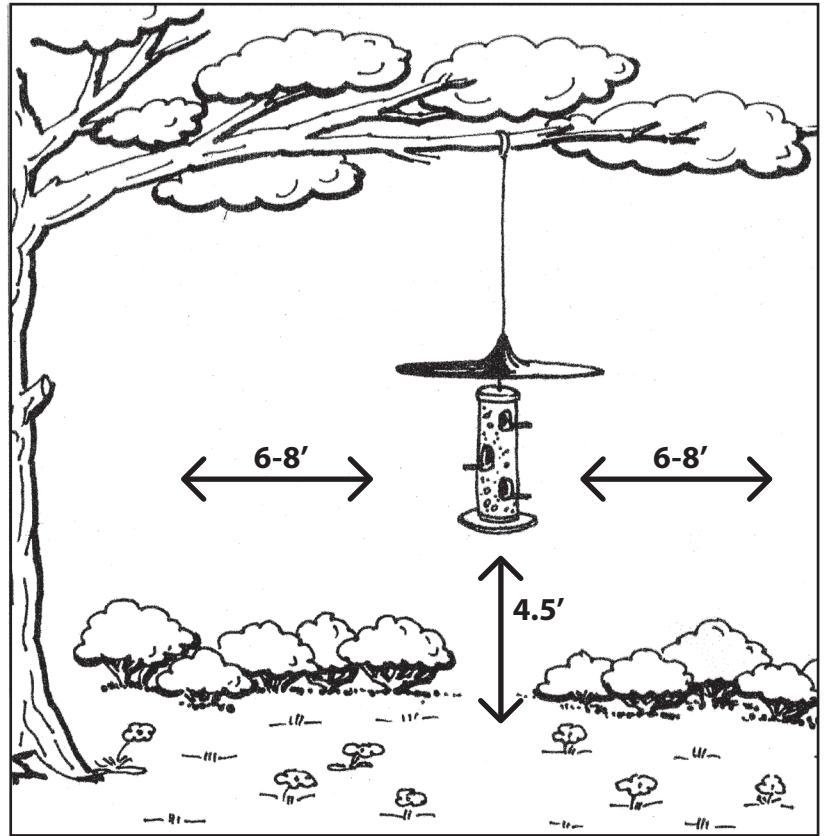
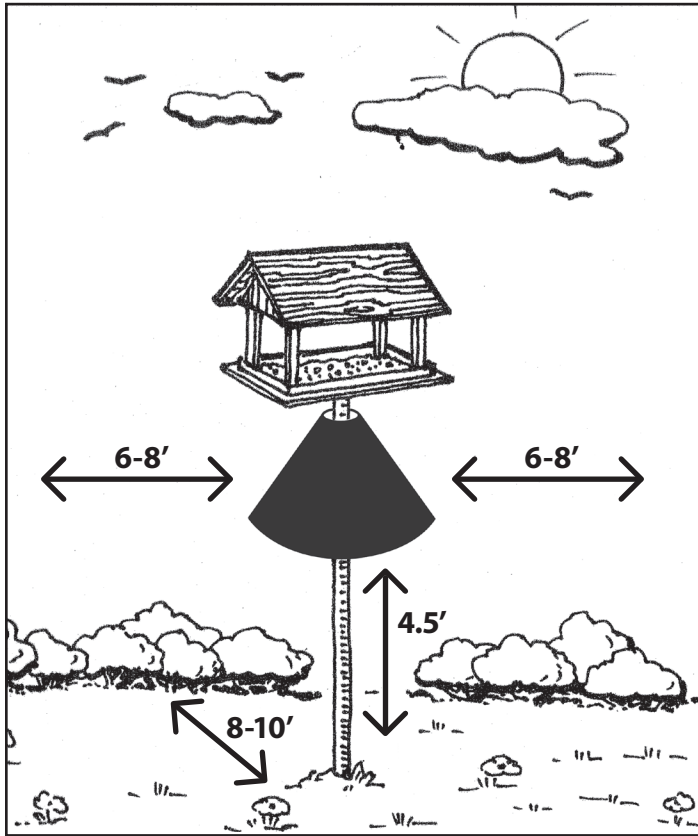
"Squirrel Away" is capsicum pepper, that when mixed with bird seed, gives squirrels and other mammals temporary "hot mouth." "Squirrel Away" is not recommended when dogs or small children will be around the feeder.

The exclusive use of safflower or Nyjer, two seeds that squirrels are not terribly fond of, has also proven successful.

Generally, the most satisfying approach to squirrel problems is to combine the use of well placed baffle protected feeders or squirrel-proof feeders with diversion feeders made specifically for squirrels. Squirrels do perform a service by cleaning up seed spilled by the birds. If there is too much kick out from your mix, switch to a single seed. Although they can be aggravating, squirrels are also intelligent, inquisitive, energetic, and amusing to watch. Once you are able to effectively deal with them, their presence becomes just one more fascinating wildlife addition to your backyard.



How to Baffle the Squirrel with Baffles



Pole-mounted Feeders

Our can, disk, or cone-shaped baffles will keep squirrels from climbing up a pole to your feeder.

Choose a spot that:

- Has 6-8 feet of clearance on all sides
- Has bushes, shrubs, or trees 8-10 feet away to provide cover for our birds
- Can be seen easily and often from indoors

Hanging Feeders

Our disc or dome-shaped baffles will keep squirrels from a feeder hung 6-8 feet away from the tree trunk.

Come check out our selection of the best squirrel-proof bird feeders available.