

## HOME & GARDEN TIPS

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### Controlling Armadillos

Again this year I am getting some calls on controlling armadillos. The armadillo's diet generally consists of earthworms, insect larvae, and tender roots and shoots. On rare occasions, they will find a ground nesting bird's nest and eat the eggs. They cause damage by rooting in lawns, golf courses, vegetable gardens, and flowerbeds.

When looking the area over for signs, you will usually find a small path leading to a den. They are persistent diggers and have a distinctive three-toed track, which shows sharp claw marks.

The animals are about 2 feet long and comparable in size to an opossum. For that reason some people call them possum on the half shell. Others call them a pain in the garden.

An armadillo can invade a flower garden with all the attitude of a wild hog. They eat insects and grubs, and their thick claws make short work of landscaping.

They root and root like a hog does and they may root an area 100 square feet. People say they're eating my plants, but they're not eating the plants, they're digging them out of the ground.

The critters have poor eyesight and they waddle out mostly at dusk or at night in search of a meal. More than one armadillo can live in an area.

The only way to get rid of an armadillo is to trap it and dispatch the animal. There is no armadillo-hunting season and the animals can be killed any time of the year. Armadillos are even eaten in some parts of the country.

Trapping an armadillo requires baiting a cage with spoiled fruit or something else that will attract insects. The mouth of the trap must have wings extending from each side that will guide the animal into the cage.

What is the reason for the wings? They're not real smart and would not find their way into the traps.

The animals are natives of Central and South America, but made their way into what is now Texas in the 1800's. Someone brought the animals to Florida and they began spreading north into Georgia. We had armadillos in Florida before Mississippi ever had one. The animals have since found their way throughout much of the Southeast.

The number one killer of armadillos is probably automobiles.