

BEARSMART

# Fruit Trees and Bears



**our challenge** Bears exist throughout most of Alberta. Black bears are found across the province, with the exception of some agricultural lands in the south east corner of the province and grizzly bears are found primarily along the Rocky Mountains and in the Foothills of western Alberta. In recent years some areas of the province, particularly parts of southern Alberta, have been experiencing grizzly bear activity in areas further east of traditional home ranges.

A large portion of Alberta's bear populations overlap areas where people live, work and play. This has resulted in increasing human bear interactions on both public and private lands. Some interactions involve bears accessing unnatural food sources including garbage, fruit trees, bee yards, livestock feed and livestock.

Fruit trees can attract bears into residential areas creating issues of public safety and potential property damage. Attempts are often made to capture and remove bears that begin to associate developed areas as possible food sources. If attractants remain available, there is a risk that other bears will eventually discover them and the issue will repeat itself. By properly securing or removing fruit from trees, bears will have no reason to frequent these developed areas and they will typically move on. The result is no loss of fruit, no property damage or public safety concerns and no need to remove bears – a win for all concerned.



Black bear in Mountain Ash tree

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In recent years, human bear interactions have been on the rise. This is often a direct result of the bears discovering the multitude of unsecured attractants in developed areas, including fruit trees. There are a number of proactive measures that are recommended to prevent bears from accessing the fruit.

**Remove fruit from tree** – Physically pick fruit from tree before fruit ripens in late August / early September. This includes any fruit that may have fallen on the ground.

**Remove fruit tree** – Some landowners are not interested in the fruit. They have chosen the species of tree for the spring flowers that they produce. In this case, landowners can consider replacing their fruit tree with a species that produces beautiful spring flowers without the fall fruit. For a list of non-fruit bearing flowering trees and shrubs, visit [wildsmart.ca/recommended-plants-for-landscaping.htm](http://wildsmart.ca/recommended-plants-for-landscaping.htm). Landowners can also choose to remove the fruit tree and not replace it.

**Install electric fence** - Properly designed and installed electric fence has proven to be very effective at deterring bears from accessing fruit trees and causing property damage to the tree itself. These can be permanent fences or they can be erected just for the fall fruit season.

**Properly secure picked fruit** – Ensure picked fruit is stored in a bear-proof facility such as a residence, locked shed or bear resistant container.

**Properly dispose of unwanted fruit** – Ensure unwanted fruit is disposed of in a safe location away from developments. Some communities have bear proof disposal containers specifically for unwanted fruit in the fall.

**Carry and know how to use bear spray** - It is recommended that those who live, work and recreate in bear country carry bear spray and to know how to use it properly. Bear spray is an effective tool to deter bears and other wildlife and is easy to use. [aep.alberta.ca/recreation-public-use/alberta-bear-smart/default.aspx](http://aep.alberta.ca/recreation-public-use/alberta-bear-smart/default.aspx)

## Resources available for reducing human bear conflict

Current programs within Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) can help Albertans reduce chances of negative encounters with bears. On a case-by-case basis, AEP will loan electric fence kits and / or bear resistant containers to landowners who are experiencing bear problems. Call your local AEP office to determine if this program exists in your area. For additional information on how to prevent interactions with bears or other wildlife, visit Alberta BearSmart at [bearsmart.alberta.ca](http://bearsmart.alberta.ca).



Flowering plum tree



Electric fence around fruit trees



Bear proof dumpster for fruit

