



“Preparing for Spring in the Mountains”

When the flowers begin to emerge from the ground, temperatures are above freezing in the mornings, and geese move from one pond or lake to another, it is necessary to prepare your home and property for the likelihood of mountain critters. Mid-Spring of last year I learned first hand the importance of not leaving anything outside that can be interpreted as “food” for woodland creatures, such as; bears, raccoons, fox, skunks and opossums.

Having been awakened by a large crashing sound about 7:30 in the morning one day last Spring, I discovered that the serenity of my cabin was being invaded by a large female bear and her 3 cubs. Little did I know that the “squirrel proof” bird feeder I had re-

cently purchased was not bear proof, nor was the screen on my porch. Watching “Big Mama” run off the porch with a bag of cat food in her mouth was the first indication that my porch had been broken into. And sure enough, after the family left from my eyesight I began evaluating the damage that had incurred. So the cleanup began, cleaning up the remnants of the feeder, and fixing the large whole on my porch, I realized I need to critter-proof my home.

Why is it that when you buy one of those expensive “squirrel-proof” bird feeders it doesn’t come with the instructions: “*DO NOT LEAVE OUT DOORS FROM EARLY SPRING TO LATE FALL, DUE TO ATTRACTING BEARS, RACCOONS, AND OTHER WOODLAND CREATURES*”? I never imagined I wouldn’t be able to use them year round, after all the beautiful birds we have up here need to eat during the Summer too! So what was the next step? I had heard if you hand your feeder about 15-20 feet up a tree with a rope attached for easy filling, that the bears wouldn’t be able to smell it, then in turn climb up and destroy it like the others. So I did this, and low and behold a few mornings later another crashing sound awakened me.

I looked outside, and a young male bear was just coming down from the tree where my feeder had been hanging, and was climbing down to claim his prize, I think he thought it was a Piñata!

Needless to say, after that the birds had to fend for themselves in finding a food source. I had also learned that hummingbird feeders, barbeque grills, and unlocked basements we attractants for these critters. So after using the grill, I would clean it, and after placing the trash in the basement, I would lock the door with a padlock, and while cooking dinner I would close the windows, sounds silly, but I had several occurrences where I would be cooking in the kitchen with the window open, and I would look up and a big old black and brown nose would be sniffing by my window hoping for a well cooked meal.

After using these precautionary measures, my property became less attractive, and fewer and fewer four legged visitors made an appearance. I would slip up every now and then, like the night when I had been working on my deck, and I left out bag of potato chips, I was awakened when my dog noticed the motion sensor light come on. Another young male bear had found the bag, and was sitting on the porch eating it; I guess he thought I didn’t want it anymore!

Trial and error plays a large part in “critter-proofing” your home, along with just a small amount of common sense. I would have never thought while living in Atlanta, that I needed to clean my barbeque grill immediately after use, keep my windows closed while cooking in the kitchen, lock my trash in the basement, and especially not being able to feed the birds and squirrels would become a way of life, and in some peoples eyes, a way of survival. But, I guess whenever you move to another city or town you have to adjust your way of thinking, and living.



Big Mama, photo by Scott Anna