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Trim The Hedges

By: Zia Siddiqi

Keep pests out of sight with these landscaping tips.



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If you walk around the exterior of your building in the summer, you're likely to see blue skies, blooming flowers and lush greenery.

What you may not see, however, is the impact your landscaping choices may be having on pest pressures around your property.

In fact, your landscaping choices may be causing a frenzy of pest activity right underneath your

freshly manicured grounds.

While having an aesthetically pleasing property may be a priority, it's also important to remember that landscape practices can play a significant role in making your facility vulnerable to pests.

In order to avoid creating an attractive harbor-age for pests looking for food, water and shelter,

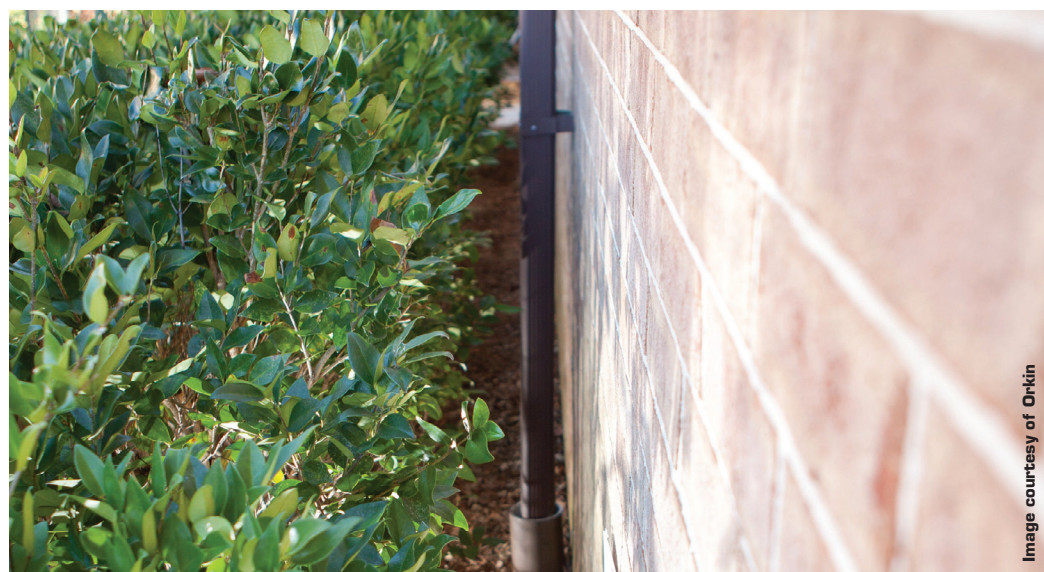


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Keep trees and vegetation at least two to three feet away from your building.

it is important to consider factors such as vegetation type and position when planting around buildings.

Pest infestations can destroy your hard-earned reputation.

As a result, pest management should always be a top priority in your landscaping decisions.

Talk with your pest management professional about landscaping options that may be less attractive to pests, and check the following problem areas when performing your regular grounds keeping routine to help ensure pests stay off the premises.

Flowers And Plants

Brightly colored flowers and ground covering plants may provide a welcoming environment for tenants, customers and guests, but they also extend an invitation to pests.

As flowers such as marigolds, chrysanthemums, daisies and geraniums grow into full bloom, their buds can attract bees and other flying pests, so consider planting fewer blooming flowers to help decrease the presence of pests on your property.

Plants bearing nuts, seeds, full-season flowers or fruits should also be avoided because they attract pests looking for food.

Additionally, be sure to minimize ground covering plants such as spreading yews and crawling junipers, as they can provide a cozy home for insects and rodents.

Work with your pest management professional to determine what types of plants and flowers are best to plant around your property.

Trees And Vegetation

Branches, shrubs and other plants can serve as a bridge for pests such as ants and cockroaches to crawl up the masonry and into your building via cracks and crevices.

To eliminate this access point, trim back trees and vegetation at least two to three feet from exterior walls and windows, even at the roof level.

Barriers

Installing a three-foot gravel strip, made of quarter-inch pebbles, around the entire perimeter of your facility can help deter different pests from finding a way inside.

Rodents don't like crossing open spaces and the rocks present a formidable obstacle

to roaches, ants and other crawling insects.

By setting up a protective barrier around your building, you can help discourage entry and keep your landscaping trim and neat.

Mulch

While organic mulch can provide an ample source of nutrients and retain moisture for flowers, trees and bushes, it is also a hotspot for pests.

The moisture in organic mulch attracts a variety of insects and rodents, from roaches to mice, and these critters will often burrow into the ground around your building to get out of plain sight.

Instead, consider using pencil cedar mulch, which retains less moisture and can actually repel certain types of ants.

Over-watering can also contribute to conditions conducive to insect survival.

Water Features

Mosquitoes can breed and lay their eggs in standing water of any size, so birdbaths, fountains, ponds and even containers of water are all potential homes to hundreds of biting, nagging insects.

Make sure you change the water in birdbaths, reflecting pools and other water features at least once a week to help prevent breeding.

Running water can help thwart mosquitoes from laying eggs on the surface, so be sure any ponds or fountains are circulated regularly.

Ponds also can be stocked with mosquito-eating fish, which eat up to 500 larvae per day.

Parking Lots And Sidewalks

Regularly inspect parking lots and sidewalks to ensure they are clear of any trash or standing water.

These items can provide a quick snack for wandering pests, so be sure your maintenance routine includes outdoor inspections.

While dumpsters may be unattractive to people, they are also a gold mine for pests looking for food.

Be sure to position them away from the building and rotate trash bins on a regular basis.

Also, keep an eye on vegetation in parking lot islands since these can harbor pests as well.



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Roaches and crawling insects need an opening of only 1/32 of an inch to get into your building.

Building Foundation

Monitor your building for any cracks or holes in windows, along rooflines and on exterior walls.

Rodents need only a quarter-sized opening to find their way in, while roaches and other crawling insects can fit through an opening of just 1/32 of an inch.

After identifying a crack or crevice, apply a weather-resistant sealant and mesh to keep insects and rodents from sneaking through.

Also, consider adding weather strips on the bottom of doors and around windows to help keep out ants.

Whether you're just touching up some of the surrounding areas outside your building or starting from scratch with a new landscaping design, proper pest management practices should be an influential factor in your decision-making process.

As with any successful routine, keeping pests at bay requires diligent effort and extensive experience, so be sure to consult with your pest management professional before making any major changes to your grounds care.

By implementing these simple strategies and watching out for key problem areas, your facility will have the charm it needs to attract tenants and guests, not pests. **CM**

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