

Bearproofing Your Trash

Help Keep Bears Wild



Garbage Kills Bears

Allowing bears to use trash and garbage as a food source creates serious problems for both people and bears. Because the food reward is so great, bears are willing to work hard to get at trash and garbage, and return often in hopes of finding more. These food-conditioned bears sometimes enter homes, garages or even vehicles in search of an easy meal. Bears in pursuit of such a good source of calories can do a lot of property damage, and even become aggressive. Allowing bears to get into the garbage is one of the leading causes of human-bear conflicts. Being smart about how you handle and store your trash can protect your home and property, and help keep bears alive and wild.



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Lock it Up

Keep trash and recyclables safely locked inside your home or a sturdy, locked garage or outbuilding constructed of heavy wood or metal. Don't leave any trash outside overnight; even empty bottles, cans, packages and recyclables have odors that attract bears. Don't store trash on your deck or screened in porch, and don't stash your trash in your car, truck or camper. If you keep trash in your garage or an outbuilding, it should have sturdy doors and windows that lock. Put trash out the morning of pick up only.

Use a Bear-Resistant Enclosure

Ordinary chain link, wood or vinyl fencing won't keep out bears. Bears are great climbers, and can easily scoot up and over fencing if there's something on the other side they really want. Black bears are also good diggers, and can tunnel underneath fencing as well.



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If you can't store your garbage inside a sturdy locked building, a heavy duty chain link fenced enclosure with a chain-link "roof" and a concrete pad bottom and a locking (not latching) gate can help keep out your average bears. Just remember that garbage in an enclosure still gives off odors that attract bears and other wildlife, so it's very important you always remember to lock the enclosure, and check your home and property often to make sure there's nothing else for bears to explore after they give up on the trash. See our brochure on Living with Bears and our fact sheet on bear proofing your home for more information.

In areas with high bear activity, it's better to secure trash inside the house, or a sturdy locked garage or specially constructed outbuilding with concrete or cinder block construction with heavy duty wood or steel doors and roof. Sides need to be flush with the ground, with no more than a 2" gap at the bottom of the doors. Ventilation holes should be kept to a minimum and covered with heavy gauge steel mesh.

Freeze It

You can reduce odors that attract bears by keeping smelly items out of the trash until pick up or you're ready to take it to the dump. Keep a bag or container in your freezer for any bits of food, meat, bones, fruit or anything else that's likely to give off odors. Then just throw out the bag the morning of pick up, or when you take your trash to the dump.



Keep it Clean

Clean your trash containers frequently with ammonia or bleach solutions, or use a heavy-duty pine-scented cleaner. Avoid using anything with a fruity or lemony scent to clean trash cans or anything else outside. You can use a heavy duty air freshener designed to remove odors on the inside of the lid to help cut down odors. Double-bagging trash or using special bags that eliminate or contain odors can help as well. Just remember never to leave plastic bags of trash outside of the container. Of course, don't mix ammonia and bleach; doing so produces dangerous fumes that can be deadly for both people and bears.

Use a Bear Resistant Container



© Bear Smart Durango

Even sturdy metal or plastic trash containers with snap-on lids are not bear resistant. Bears use their paws much like people use their hands, and can often just pop off or unlatch the lid.

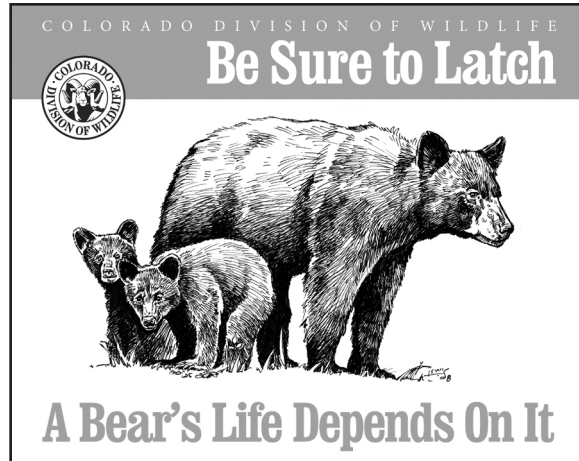
Bears are also very strong, so if the lid doesn't pop off, it's not much effort for a bear to dent, crack or split an ordinary can. There are a wide variety of bear resistant containers available,

from your typical 35-gallon household container to dumpsters. For a complete review of bear resistant options, visit the Living with Wildlife Foundation's Web site at www.lwwf.org.

This non-profit organization tests and certifies containers for the International Grizzly Bear Committee. There's also a comprehensive list of containers on our Web site at www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears - just scroll down under **Living with Bears**.

If you have curb side pick up, check with your trash collection service to make sure they'll service bear-resistant containers. If they won't, you can do the bears, yourself and your neighbors a favor if you encourage the company to do the wildlife-friendly and responsible thing, and service containers that don't put bears at risk.

Central Trash Collection



This weather-resistant sticker is a great way to remind people that a bear's life could depend on them taking the time to latch the dumpster. You can get free stickers at your local Division of Wildlife office.

If you take your trash to a dumpster, please do your part to avoid attracting bears, and never leave trash outside the dumpster. Make sure the lid is securely closed and latched. If your dumpster doesn't have a latching lid, or has a flimsy plastic lid bears could easily peel back, ask your trash hauler to provide a bear-resistant dumpster. Some homeowners associations and neighborhoods that want to help prevent problems for themselves and the bears have worked with their trash companies to replace plastic lids with sturdy metal ones that chain and lock, which can be a cost effective alternative to a new dumpster.

PLEASE DO YOUR PART TO KEEP BEARS WILD

Visit www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears for more information or call your local Division of Wildlife office.