

Natural-Based Repellent Solves Facility's Goose Problem

When Max Wilson signed on as custodian and yard man for the McKenzie Career Center in Indianapolis, IN, he inherited an indelicate problem. Canada geese overran the two scenic ponds on the facility's grounds, leaving droppings and creating an ongoing safety hazard. The flock of birds, numbering between 100 and 150, routinely left an unsightly mess of droppings directly in front of the facility.

"It made a bad impression," says Wilson. He feared

for the safety of the geese also, as they strutted on the driveway in front of the school and throughout the parking lot. "They could be run over by vehicles," says Wilson. "The geese would force cars to stop. It was bothersome."

According to experts, Canada geese are attracted to landscapes that offer easy access to water and abundant forage, such as grass and pond algae. Jim Bland, owner of an Illinois-based lake-management firm, says lakes can host hundreds to thousands of geese, depending on lake size.

"Lawns can be carpeted with feces," says Bland. Besides the obvious problems of excrement and odor, the birds raise health issues. Geese are known to harbor disease-bearing parasites and bacteria. They are also stubborn, territorial and aggressive, and often chase employees and visitors from building entrances.

Neither Wilson or the school wanted to harm the geese that frequented the grounds of the McKenzie Career Center, but the problem needed to be resolved. That's when his supervisor read about GooseChase, a goose-repellent product distributed by Bird-X, Inc., of Chicago. GooseChase is a liquid concentrate made from extracts of grape parts known to be distasteful to geese. A solution of one part GooseChase to 30 parts water is sprayed on grass and vegetation where the geese forage. The solution irritates their palates, which sends them away to "greener pastures," according to the company. The biodegrad-

able product is safe for the environment and does not harm the birds. It simply renders food sources unpalatable to them.

Wilson gave it a try. He prepared two gallons of GooseChase mix and sprayed it on the grass surrounding the facility's two ponds. Within one day, the geese were repelled, he says, as were the smaller number of ducks that also congregated at the ponds.

"Product directions suggest repeating the spray at two-week intervals, but I haven't had to spray that often," says Wilson. "Three or four times a year is enough," unless heavy rains wash the solution off, he says. The reappearance of the geese, adds Wilson, "tells me when it's time to reapply."

Bland, who also uses the product, recommends using a backpack sprayer to distribute the solution evenly and widely. He also suggests that crew members wear gloves and protective clothing.

Wilson says since he began using GooseChase, he's noticed a decrease in the neighborhood's goose population. The product has also cut at least three hours of cleanup time from his weekly schedule, now that droppings are no longer piling up on facility grounds. He feels the school environment is healthier, too, since it has minimized the chance for human contact with the bird feces.

"For us it has worked," he says. "Where GooseChase is, geese are not." □
Bird-X, 300 N. Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL 60607; 312-226-2473.

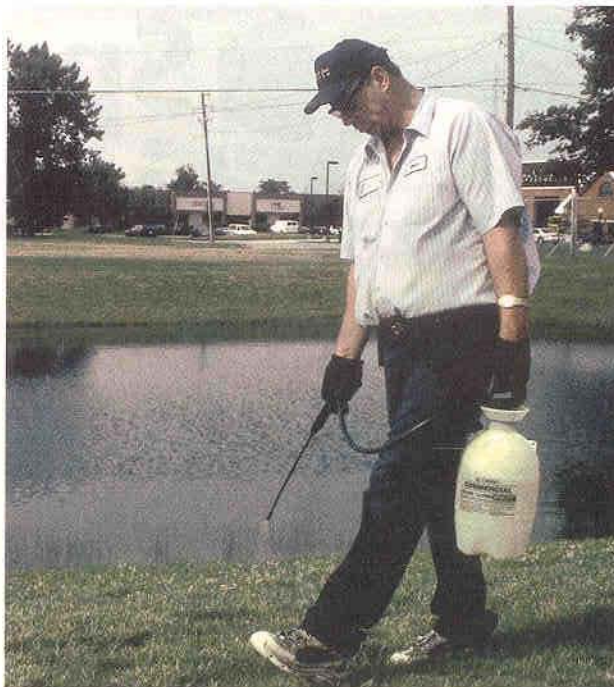
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School custodian Max Wilson applies GooseChase repellent around a lake that attracts geese.