

## **Please Don't Feed the Bears: How to Keep Bears at Bay**

As Pennsylvania's 15,000 bears try to pack on the pounds before a long winter's nap, many are coming closer to residential areas to hunt for food. Here are some tips on how to stay safe by keeping bears at bay:

- **Play it smart.** Do not feed wildlife. Food placed outside for wildlife, even in bird feeders, can become "bear magnets." In prime bear areas, restrict bird feeding to late November through late March, when bears den. Avoid foods that are particularly attractive for bears, such as sunflower seeds, hummingbird nectar, and suet. Bring feeders inside at night or suspend them from high cross wires.
- **Keep it clean.** Don't put garbage out until pick-up day, throw table scraps outside for animals to eat, or add fruit or vegetable waste to your compost pile. Also, clean your barbecue grill regularly, and if you feed pets outdoors, consider placing food dishes inside overnight. Encourage your neighbors to do the same.
- **Keep your distance.** If a bear shows up in your yard, stay calm. From a safe distance, shout at it like you would to chase an unwanted dog. Make noise and let the bear know it is not welcome. Bears have very poor eyesight, so if you don't make noise, the bear may not be aware of your presence.
- **Eliminate temptation.** Urge neighbors to work together to reduce an area's appeal to bears. Ask area businesses to keep trash containers closed and bear-proofed (*chained or locked shut*).
- **Check, please!** If a dog is barking or a cat is clawing at the door to get in, try to determine why. Do so cautiously, however, turning on outside lights and making noise.