Rodent Prevention

Rodents can occasionally be an issue in community gardens. Rats are known to spread several bacterial and viral diseases, and are far from making your garden a welcoming place for your human neighbours!

What do rats need?
Rats need three things to live: food, water and shelter. A community garden typically will not sustain a population of rodents as they need more than vegetable scrap to thrive, such as animal fat and protein. But to avoid any nuisance, plan and manage your garden properly, so it does not become an attractive environment for rodents. In general, following simple tips can eliminate or minimize rat problems.

Maintain your compost properly
- Choose your compost container wisely - 1/4 inch steel hardware cloth is a durable and economical option to keep rodents out
- Turn and water compost piles regularly to promote active composting
- Elect 3 or 4 gardeners to be in charge of caring for the compost
- Organize compost education workshops

Eliminate shelter and cover
- Keep your garden plots free of excess foliage or undergrowth. Keep plants pruned. This will help to eliminate cover for rodents so that they will find your garden less appealing as a home.
- Remove clutter from storage sheds and cut grass or weeds and trim back plants around buildings and walls.
- Grow food in raised beds.

Eliminate food sources
- Do not allow gardeners and neighbours to bring food scrap to the garden (cooked foods, meats, dairy, eggs, or animal bones). A compost pile with only garden scraps will not sustain a rat colony.
- Harvest ripe produce promptly and don’t let produce fall to the ground.
- Do not spread birdseeds around the garden, as they can become food for rats.
- Eliminate standing water and improve drainage, so water doesn’t pool or settle.