

Striped skunks have been increasingly bold, coming right up to my back door. These nocturnal mammals, although adorably cute from afar, should not be approached as they can spray as a defense mechanism their strong musk several times with an accuracy of 12 feet. In addition, skunks are carriers of rabies. As much as their smell is disgusting, skunks are beneficial for reducing rodents and pesky insects. However, once they take up residence in your yard, garage, shed or deck, they are problematic. Do your best to secure entry holes in and under buildings and decks. Skunks can burrow as they forage to go from outside to in. If skunks are bothering you, call Vector Control at (925) 771-6190 to request a skunk inspection.

In case your pet is sprayed, try this homemade neutralizer recipe:

Stink Remover Recipe

1 quart 3% hydrogen peroxide

¼ cup baking soda

1 teaspoon dishwashing detergent

(Mix together and wash your pet keeping the concoction out of the eyes, nose, and mouth. Rinse with water. If necessary, wash again. Do not bottle or store this solution as a chemical reaction could cause an explosion.)

Blue-tailed lizards, also known as skinks, have provided hours of entertainment as they sprint from rock to rock. Some veterinarians state that skinks may be poisonous to pets, specifically cats, although there are no concrete published studies. Having bright coloring on the skin often indicates that an animal is venomous or unpalatable but in the case of the blue tailed skink this quality is a useful decoy inviting birds to attack the tail and not its vital organs. Lizard tails regenerate. Lizards are excellent garden protectors eating many of the bothersome insects that plague our landscapes. Welcome them.

Grapes are ripening on the vine as the sun kisses the clusters. Bunches resemble still life paintings with their colors of blue, purple, absinthe and rose. (Next month be on the lookout for my article on our Lamorinda grape harvest.) Hydrangeas that were originally a deep vermilion are showing florets of lime green mottled with pink. Green is the most prevalent color in nature. It's enlightening to take time to truly immerse your senses in the multitude of shades and hues before the leaves turn amber, gold, crimson and red.

When the weather allows, get outside to enjoy the call of the wild. Bring the breath of the earth into our souls by soaking in nature outside. Out is in. Inhale deeply.

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A blue-tailed lizard can regenerate its tail



Turkeys trotting across the field.



Palms and verdant landscaping are an oasis from the heat.