

Rats attack homeowner's lemon tree

By Robert Morris, Xtreme Horticulture, The Spectrum December 30, 2015, USA

Question:

We have a critter attacking our lemons. It does not eat the fruit, only the peel. It eats the peel so cleanly that only the bare fruit is left hanging on the tree. The white pith is gone to. It is a strange thing to see a naked lemon hanging on the tree. Do you have any idea what this critter could be?

Answer: This is most likely rats. I have not seen nor has it been reported to me directly but several reports in the U.S. and Australia attribute the eating of lemon peels but not the pulp to rats. This can happen to fruit on the tree or on the ground.

Rats will also gnaw on the bark and branches of citrus trees.

Contrary to this, it has been reported that rats will eat the pulp of oranges and pomegranates but not the rind or outer covering. It is not understood why but lemon peels and pomegranate juice is high in Vitamin C and calcium.

Rats produce their own Vitamin C inside their bodies so it is not clear what they are going after by selectively eating rind and not the fruit. It is also reported to me that rats will eat guava fruit and papaya in the tropics, another source of high Vitamin C.



Research on rats and Vitamin C in the early 1900's report says that rats may benefit from extra Vitamin C in their diets in growth and reproduction. Better get the rat traps out.