

**Q** How can I keep the deer and elk from rubbing on my trees?  
- Missoula County

**A** Deer and elk often rub on trees to remove the velvet from their antlers. The only way to prevent this is by installing fencing around trees. This will exclude deer and elk from rubbing on the trunks and from eating the tender new shoots and leaves in the spring. Woven wire fencing, 8 feet in height, is the easiest solution. Electric fencing can also be beneficial. These types of fences should be triple-galvanized, high-tensile, and carrying a current of 3,000 to 4,500 volts.

**Q** Can I put the fall leaves from my yard in the compost pile?  
- Yellowstone County

**A** Leaves are great for composting as they are high in carbon and can contain many trace elements that are depleted in some garden soils. Nitrogen is needed to feed the bacteria that compost the organic matter in leaves. Grass cuttings are one source of nitrogen that can be added to the mixture to meet this requirement. Be careful not to include clippings that have been sprayed with certain herbicides because they will contaminate compost and cause problems later when the compost is applied. Another thing to be aware of is that leaves may take a long time to break down. For faster compost, leaves should be shredded before they are added to the compost pile. The only leaves that should never go into the compost pile are those of black walnut, which produce natural herbicides that will prevent seeds from germinating. For more information on home composting, find MSU Extension’s free MontGuide *Home Composting* (MT199203AG) at <http://www.msuextension.org/store>.



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**Q** What birds overwinter in Montana and what can I do to provide food and habitat for them?  
- Lewis & Clark County

**A** Contrary to popular belief, not all birds fly south for the winter. You may see a variety of backyard birds such as Pine Siskin, House Finch, Evening Grosbeak, Nuthatches, Northern Flicker, American Tree Sparrow, Mountain Chickadees and Steller’s Jay, provided you supply four key criteria: food, water, habitat and a nesting place.

Food can come in many forms, from perennial seed heads, trees and shrubs with persistent fruiting structures (like rose hips) and cone bearing trees, to supplemental seed mixes. Feeders should be placed high enough that cats and other animals can’t reach them, and close to shrubs and/or trees so birds can carry food and seek shelter easily. Avoid placing feeders near windows to prevent birds from striking the glass. Water can be challenging in Montana winters, but a heated bird bath would suffice unless you are fortunate enough to live near a water source such as a river, stream, pond or lake that doesn’t freeze solid. A yard landscaped with a variety of plant material (think about height variations and clustering plants en masse), offers adequate cover for most birds. Leaving some unkempt areas in the fall also helps provide cover and nesting sites as well as seed heads for food.

For more information on Montana birds visit: [www.mtaudubon.org](http://www.mtaudubon.org). For information on Birds of North America, and to hear their song, visit: <https://birdsna.org/Species-Account/bna/home>.



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Do you have Master Gardener questions? Send them to: [extensionmagazine@montana.edu](mailto:extensionmagazine@montana.edu).

How do people take such impressive pictures with phone cameras?



Mat Walter, MSU Extension Agent in Musselshell/Golden Valley Counties

Today’s cameras capture images in megapixels (one million pixels). Each pixel is a tiny square portion of the image. Those squares combined determine the detail of the image, the more squares the sharper and better quality the image. A novice digital camera today will usually produce 24-30 megapixels (MP). In 2004, my flip phone camera had 0.3 megapixels, while my current phone camera has 12MP. It’s easy to see how far technology has progressed for better imagery.

All cell phones rely on an application or “app” to access and operate the camera. Whether an Apple, LG, Samsung or Motorola, the icon for the camera app is universal, it’s an image of a camera. Each manufacturer may offer app features like filters, lighting and live or motion photo controls, grids and even lens kits.

Filters allow us to color the image in certain shades and tones, such as black

and white, sepia or vivid. Current phones offer filters in warm and cool tones, dense gray casts, or effects such as paint, chalk and sketch. There are also apps available to add animations to photos. The purpose of a filter is to create a more dynamic photo and give the image personality or depth that might not otherwise exist.

Dynamic lighting gives an option to select a specific lighting scenario for taking pictures. Stage lighting is an option on some models which gives the impression the image is taken in a spotlight. Using the live photo option, available on iPhones, short video bursts are taken that allow better editing of images. Live photo is useful when taking freeze frame or action shots.

Another useful tool that most phones incorporate are gridlines. The gridlines split the screen into thirds, creating nine squares and four intersections. This helps guide the use of photographers’ “rule of thirds.” This rule suggests that a photo should be framed so the focal point(s) align with the lines and corners of the grid, not in the center of the image.

Finally, lens kits are attachments which can augment a camera’s features. A lens kit usually contains three kinds of lenses: a wide angle, a fish-eye, and a macro lens. A wide-angle lens widens the aperture to capture a more open image in the horizontal direction. A fish-eye lens gives an image from a fish’s perspective inside a fish bowl, which is a wider angle in all directions and a little distorted. The macro lens is my favorite of the clip-ons. It works as an ultra-close subject lens, allowing the capture of the tiniest details. Depending on the fit of the lens, you may end up with a “ghost ring” which is a gray fuzz or shaded ring surrounding the outside of the image; this happens when the lens doesn’t clip well to the phone.

A cell phone camera gives us an opportunity to capture life as it happens. We’re always prepared to capture a moment while that phone is close in our pocket, and the technology to capture those memories is increasingly improved as time passes. ■



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TOP: wide-angle lens (MOLLY HAMMOND); LEFT: fisheye lens (CLIPART.COM); RIGHT: macro lens (NORI PEARCE)