

# Trim trees to keep squirrels away from house

By BILL GARWOOD  
For the Journal-Constitution  
Published on: 06/30/06

Q: I am a regular reader of your column and wondered if you had a suggestion for a squirrel problem we are having at our house. It seems that squirrels are eating away at our siding, and an estimate for several thousand dollars was suggested to put in cement siding in the areas where we have siding, mainly in the back, since it is a primarily brick house. Is there any less expensive alternative that might keep these squirrels from chewing up our siding?

A: I used to live in a house with cedar siding. Squirrels would randomly chew holes in my siding and nest in my attic and walls. Needless to say, this was both costly and a nuisance.

I finally solved the problem by hiring a tree service to trim all tree branches away from my house. This eliminated the squirrels' access. Then I hired a pest-removal service to strategically set live traps in my attic and on the exterior of the house. The problem with live traps is that you have to take the trapped squirrels miles away so they don't just find their way back to your house. To save money I agreed to relocate my squirrels myself.

Once we were sure that all the squirrels were gone, we repaired the damage they had done. Of course you have to keep the trees trimmed and immediately trap any new squirrels entering the house. This worked for me, and it was considerably less expensive than re-siding the house.

Q: This morning your article was about slab cracks. I recently moved here from up north and now have a new "patio-style" home on a concrete slab. In the past I have had homes with basements, so this is new to me. My concern: The bathroom ceramic tiles have cracked in an irregular line from the door to the tub (six tiles). One tile was cracked when I moved in (August), and I just recently noticed the others. My "11- month inspection" is due soon. What should I ask or demand during the inspection? The warranty inspector told me the tile would be replaced, but should I demand a more thorough inspection? Thanks for your help.

A: First of all let me welcome you to the South. The condition you are experiencing is not unusual. Due to time constraints in residential construction, concrete is rarely allowed to cure properly. One of the results of improper curing is cracks. The cracks are often a result of shrinkage in the concrete and do not necessarily indicate a structural problem. This is likely the case if the floor is level on both sides of the cracks. If there is a difference in height on the sides of the cracks, you may have a more serious problem. In this case I would recommend consultation with a registered structural engineer. You are seeing the cracks in your tile floors because tile is a brittle material and cracks along with the concrete. If the nature of the cracks indicates that they are due to shrinkage, then replacement of the tile is an acceptable solution. If, however, there is an elevation difference across the cracks, I recommend additional consultation with an engineer.