

One “Wannabe” Landlord’s Pole Guard: Easy, Economical & Aesthetic

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Editor’s Note: We have all heard of humankind’s endless quest to build a better mousetrap. The same urge manifests itself in the martin landlords who invent and improvise to suit their particular needs. Ostensibly, these landlords are addressing a true, practical need, but we suspect that sometimes the real need is to express creativity or feel self-sufficient, - or maybe they are just plain cheap, uh, thrifty.

Regardless, landlords have some interesting ideas and inventions, and we like from time to time to feature some. If you have something that might be of interest to Update readers, please send it in. Meanwhile, here is one cheap & nifty idea from PMCA Interim Executive Director John Tautin.

It was late April, and I was in a hurry to put up martin housing before the influx of subadults to my area in northwestern PA. Two of my neighbors have martin colonies, and there was a reasonable expectation that, if I got the



Above: What the raccoon or snake sees — a long, formidable expanse of PVC pipe.

housing up, I might get some of their surplus subadults to colonize my place. Plus, I was tired of being pestered by the PMCA staff to get with it and become a proper martin landlord. So, I opted to put up a 12-unit Deluxe Gourd Rack with SuperGourds. It is a high quality system, easy to erect and manage.

On the day I was putting the system up, I realized that I had not purchased a predator guard for it. I was not concerned about large snakes, which are quite rare in my neighborhood, and I’d worry about owl guards when martins started to nest, but I did want to add a guard against mammalian predators now. “Now”—as in today—was the operative word. First I looked around the place for suitable material and found none, but some lengths of schedule 40 PVC pipe gave me an idea. I drove to town, and about one hour and fifteen dollars later, I had the makings for my predator guard: four

feet of 6” PVC pipe and an end cap. The pipe has an outside diameter of about 7”, the same as some commonly used metal guards.

I cut a 2” square hole in the end cap to accommodate the gourd rack pole, slipped the end cap over the pipe, slipped both over the pole, and slipped the pole over the previously set steel ground stake. The guard simply stands in place on the ground.

It should deter raccoons, the most likely predator in my area. And it looks good, having the appearance of a post that coordinates well with the gourds!



Above: Editor’s note: Thank you, John. You have come a long way since your inquiry about replacing your wrecked house that was, well, less than ideal to begin with.

Left: We think that you and the martins will be much better off with the gourd rack shown at left. And we think it will work well & it looks good (the pole guard, that is).

