

## So you've had a snake in your yard?

If snakebusters have removed the snake, then you may think that your problem is gone.

### It probably isn't.

Please read on.

Snakes are creatures of habit and most of our snake calls are to properties that are perfect snake habitats.

If one snake found your property a good place to live, another may do so as well.

Just so you know, snakes generally don't like their own kind, so when you find one, it is unusual to find more than one inhabiting the same site.

However once a snake has been removed from a good living spot, the vacancy is left for another snake.

If your property is good snake real estate then it's likely you'll get another snake at some time.

While it's effectively impossible to stop all snakes entering and living in a property, there are a number of things you can do to discourage the snakes. These methods will work in most cases.

If you follow the instructions below, then your chances of getting snakes moving into your place are reduced by more than 90%. Snakes that arrive at your property and find it not to their liking will quickly move on.

This is also important if your snakebuster has been unable to find and capture a snake you have seen (yes this happens sometimes).

First a couple of points about snakes.

The dominant species in Melbourne are Tiger, Brown and Copperhead and all are deadly venomous and shouldn't be handled except by experts. Most bites occur when people try to catch and kill them and even the best snake handlers sometimes get bitten. In other words, leave the risks to the experts.

Snakes have certain needs and the most important is the need to regulate their body's temperature. This is called "thermoregulation" and if a snake could have it's way, it'd have a body temperature of about 30 degrees Celsius all the time. This desire dictates their movements on a day to day basis.

Because Melbourne is cool most of the time, snakes tend to be found in sunny places and gardens with a northerly aspect. While they will bask in the open to get warm, they prefer to bask in cover of vegetation and most people will only see snakes if the snake is wandering from place to place, when gardening or a pet finds them.

The only exception to the preceding is in hot weather when snakes move around more and sometimes enter suboptimal habitats and even houses in search of cooler spots.

If you live in a bushy area and on a north facing slope, your property is ripe for snakes and to that extent you can't do much, but now here's what you can do to remove snakes.

Remove all loose ground cover in the form of rubbish, sheets of tin, logs and rocks. If you have a rock garden, seal all the holes under the rocks. Don't give the snakes a place to hide.

Remove overgrown and creeping vegetation. Snakes will hide and secrete themselves in this and love ground-level vegetation that straddles sunny and shady spots. In other

words, remove all Ivy, Agapanthas, Blackberries, Wandering Jew and similar plants. Keep creepers out of your garden. The best plants are those that grow up on a stem and have a space between the first branches and the ground. While snakes may climb, they generally don't in Melbourne, although occasionally Tiger Snakes are found on fences, house roofs and the like.

Situations snakes love most are rocky retaining walls with overgrown vegetation, especially if there is a pool or pond nearby. This is snake heaven. If you have this, then remove overgrown plants at ground level and seal all holes at ground level with cement. Deny snakes access to hiding spots.

Remove vegetation from fencelines and along the house walls. Snakes tend to secrete themselves in these situations and move about along building and fencelines. If one side of the fence has ground cover and the other doesn't, then the snake will still be happy. In other words cooperate with your immediate neighbors to make their fencelines and gardens equally snake unfriendly. Overgrown property boundaries are preferred hiding spots for snakes so don't let weeds and creepers grow over fences. These creeping weeds are best chopped out and then regularly poisoned until all shoots die. This process can take up to two years to complete.

Further information on Melbourne's and other snakes is on the website:

<http://www.snakebusters.net>

The reference book of choice is:

*Australian Reptiles and Frogs*, (240 pp.) published in 1989 by Raymond Hoser.

Due to demand, it is now out of print, but instead available on CD-rom along with a host of other reptile-related information, including over 100 scientific papers and the 240 page book *Endangered Animals of Australia*.

The CD-rom costs \$55 (includes GST and postage), which is a bargain as the original publications as a group had cover prices totaling over \$1000.

It can be ordered at:

<http://www.smuggled.com/cdeaa.htm>

Finally, if you see a snake in the garden the best advice is move out of the way and leave it alone.

If you have pets (dogs or cats) or children under the age of 10 you should have the snake removed as these are the most likely bite victims and if bitten are also at highest risk of dying.

Remember, the key to success in a snakebuster catching a snake is for you to do the following:

Ring as soon as you see the snake ... don't wait.

Standing at a safe distance (more than 3 metres), don't take your eyes off the snake and/or guard any potential escape routes, (continually) until the snakebuster arrives. Snakebusters can be called 24 hours a day on:

**0412 777 211**

