



The Deer-Resistant Garden

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Deer have been a problem in this area for some time! As the human population has increased, the resulting house building and commercial growth has reduced their available habitat and they have simply decided to eat what we grow. How and where they feed depends, to some extent, on the harshness of the previous winter and the degree of drought in the summer but deer adapt to changing circumstances very quickly, and almost always at our expense. Once they find your garden, you become an automatic stop on their route and they are very quick to establish patterns. Breaking those patterns is a gardener's first objective. In fact, the best approach is to prevent a pattern from ever becoming established.

Deer will eat almost anything in the spring as they emerge from the rigors of winter feeding and young deer will decimate gardens as they attempt to decide what they like to eat. Highly fertilized plants with lush growth tend to attract deer; their amazing sense of smell helps to determine what is safe for them to eat but they are quick to check out anything new. In general, they avoid plants with strong smelling/tasting leaves, plants with milky sap and plants with hairy or prickly leaves. They are most active just after dark and before dawn and the gardener is therefore obliged to build a series of defenses:

1. The best defense, although not always practical or attractive, is fencing, at least 8' tall. High voltage electric fencing comes in many configurations. Surrounding a vegetable garden with some form of fencing is almost a necessity. It is possible to create other barriers around the perennial garden by using Rugosa roses, boxwood, aromatic herbal plants and other plants they don't like. Unfortunately, a hungry deer will eat almost anything! Some communities do not allow perimeter property fencing so be sure to check with your local Town Hall before adding fencing.

Some people have reported success with clear fishing line! They string it from tree to tree, 3', 5' and 8' off the ground and create an all but invisible barrier around the perimeter of their garden. It is certainly less obtrusive than fencing but will help only with deer, not raccoons, woodchucks, rabbits and other garden pests.

Chicken wire can be placed around the perimeter of the garden. Deer hate stepping on chicken wire as it catches at their hooves. Some people have had success scattering dog hair around the edges of their flower beds and simply buy dog hair from a pet-grooming retail store, renewing it frequently.

2. Create a "scent barrier" with a variety of strong odors and keep changing the mix. Deer get used to a particular smell very quickly and repellents should be changed/alternated frequently. Taste-based repellents rely on the smell of rotting eggs which deer associate with predators. There are two kinds of deer repellents:

Odor-based	Milorganite	Coast of Maine Deer Isle Salmon	Deer Solution
Taste-based	Deer Out	Plantskydd	Bobbex DeFence

Start using deer repellents before bud break in the spring and continue to reapply every few weeks and after heavy rain. Alternate the brand of repellent every 4-5 weeks and use a combination of odor-based and taste-based solutions.

Continue spraying right through December when deer establish their winter browsing routes.

A Fairfield County gardener relies on this home-made solution:

Put 9 eggs (no shells) and 5 Tbs. Texas Pete Hot Sauce in a blender and combine.
Add to 2 gallons of water, shake and spray. Rinse the sprayer after use.

3. Make an effort to use deer-resistant plants, shrubs and evergreens but realize that a hungry deer will probably eat anything! Some plants, especially natives, are less appealing than others but experience is the only guide. We have listed some plants, bulbs, vines, shrubs, and trees which, in general, appear to be more deer-resistant than others but deer appetites are fickle and talking to other gardeners in your area will give you further guidance.

Deer-Resistant Plants:

Bulbs

Autumn Crocus – Colchicum

Crocus

Flowering Onion – Allium

Grape Hyacinth – Muscari

Scilla - Scilla siberica

Summer Snowflake - Leucojum

Bluebells – Hyacinthoides

Daffodils - Narcissus

Glory-of-the-Snow – Chionodoxa

Hyacinth – Hyacinthus

Snowdrop – Galanthus

Ground Covers

Bearberry - Arctostaphylos uva-ursi

Crested Iris - Iris cristata

Lamium

Lily Turf - Liriodendron

Pachysandra

Yellow Archangel - Lamiastrum

Bugleweed – Ajuga

Epimedium

Lily-of-the-Valley - Convallaria

Myrtle - Vinca

Sweet Woodruff - Galium

Perennials

Astilbe

Bee Balm – Monarda

Catmint - Nepeta

Coral Bells - Heuchera

Ferns

Gayfeather – Liatris

Globe Thistle – Echinops

Iris

Lamb's Ear - Stachys

Lungwort – Pulmonaria

Pinks – Dianthus

Sage – Salvia

Tickseed – Coreopsis

Speedwell – Veronica

Baby's Breath - Gypsophila

Bleeding Heart – Dicentra

Columbine – Aquilegia

Evening Primrose - Oenothera

Foxglove – Digitalis

Geranium

Grasses

Lady's Mantle - Alchemilla mollis

Lavender – Lavendula

Peony

Russian Sage – Perovskia

Santolina

Turtlehead - Chelone

Yarrow - Achillea

Annuals

Ageratum	Begonia
Cannas	Coleus
Cosmos	Dahlia
Dianthus	Dusty Miller
Fuchsia	Geraniums
Heliotrope	Lantana
Lobelia	Marigold
Mexican Sunflower (Tithonia)	New Guinea Impatiens
Nicotiana	Petunia
Rudbeckia	Sage (Salvia)
Snapdragon	Spider Flower
Sweet Alyssum	Verbena
Zinnia	

Vines

Bower Vine - Actinidia	Dutchman's Pipe - Aristolochia durior
Honeysuckle - Lonicera	Hydrangea (Climbing) - Hydrangea petiolaris
Moonflower - Ipomoea alba	Morning Glory - Ipomoea purpurea
Silver Lace Vine - Polygonum aubertii	
Sweet Autumn Clematis - Clematis Maximowicziana	
Trumpet Vine - Campsis radicans	
Wisteria - Wisteria floribunda	

Shrubs

Alberta Spruce - Picea	Barberry - Berberis
Bayberry - Myrica	Bird's Nest Spruce - Picea
Blue Mist Shrub - Caryopteris	Boxwood - Buxus
Butterfly Bush - Buddleia	Cotoneaster
Daphne	Enkianthus
Fetterbush - Leucothoe	Forsythia
Fothergilla	Kalmia - Mt. Laurel
Lilac - Syringa	Montgomery Blue Spruce - Picea
Mock Orange - Philadelphus	Mountain Andromeda - Pieris
Ohio Buckeye - Aesculus parviflora	Potentilla
Rose-of-Sharon - Hibiscus	Rugosa Rose
Spirea	Summersweet - Clethra
Viburnums (Selected)	Virginia Sweetspire - Itea
Weigela	

Trees

Birchs - Betula	Dogwood (Japanese) - Cornus kousa
Magnolias	Maples - Acer
Oaks - Quercus	Pines - Pinus
Red Bud - Cercis	Spruces - Picea
Stewartia	Sweet Gum - Liquidambar
Tree Lilac (Japanese) - Syringa reticulata	Umbrella Pine - Sciadopitys
Willows - Salix	