



The Deer-Resistant Garden

447 Winthrop Road, Deep River, Ct. 06417
(860) 526-9056 www.acergardens.com
email – acer@acergardens.com

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 - Liriope

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
Cannas
Cosmos
Dianthus
Fuchsia
Heliotrope
Lobelia
Mexican Sunflower (Tithonia)
Nicotiana
Rudbeckia
Snapdragon
Sweet Alyssum
Zinnia

Begonia
Coleus
Dahlia
Dusty Miller
Geraniums
Lantana
Marigold
New Guinea Impatiens
Petunia
Sage (Salvia)
Spider Flower
Verbena

Vines

Bower Vine - Actinidia
Honeysuckle –Lonicera
Moonflower - Ipomoea alba
Silver Lace Vine - Polygonum aubertii
Trumpet Vine - Campsis radicans

Dutchman's Pipe - Aristolochia durior
Hydrangea(Climbing) - Hydrangea petiolaris
Morning Glory - Ipomoea purpurea
Sweet Autumn Clematis – Clematis Maximowicziana
Wisteria - Wisteria floribunda

Shrubs

Alberta Spruce – Picea
Bayberry – Myrica
Blue Mist Shrub - Caryopteris
Butterfly Bush - Buddleia
Daphne
Fetterbush - Leucothoe
Fothergilla
Lilac - Syringa
Mock Orange - Philadelphus
Ohio Buckeye - Aesculus parviflora
Rose-of-Sharon - Hibiscus
Spirea
Viburnums (Selected)
Weigela

Barberry – Berberis
Bird's Nest Spruce - Picea
Boxwood – Buxus
Cotoneaster
Enkianthus
Forsythia
Kalmia - Mt. Laurel
Montgomery Blue Spruce - Picea
Mountain Andromeda - Pieris
Potentilla
Rugosa Rose
Summersweet - Clethra
Virginia Sweetspire - Itea

Trees

Birchs - Betula
Magnolias
Oaks - Quercus
Red Bud - Cercis
Stewartia
Tree Lilac (Japanese) - Syringa reticulata
Willows – Salix

Dogwood (Japanese) - Cornus kousa
Maples - Acer
Pines – Pinus
Spruces - Picea
Sweet Gum - Liquidamber
Umbrella Pine - Sciadopitys