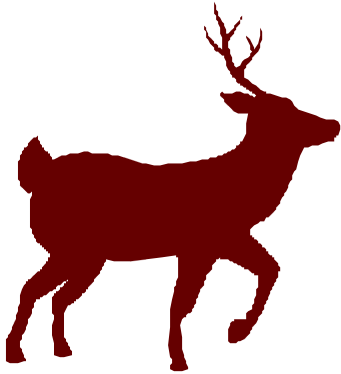




Time and Hints to Take Home

Deer Advice



One of the most frequently asked questions at Plant Land is how to prevent damage to plants from deer. The common whitetail deer that roam over all parts of the valley cause all kinds of problems for gardeners. There are a number of

strategies for dealing with these four hoofed marauders.

The first and most important strategy is to avoid attracting deer to your property. If you value your landscaping, do not ever feed deer, even at a distance, even in winter. You are teaching them to associate your property with food. One morning without a hay bale and your beautiful plants will be very tempting and probably gone.

It is also helpful to avoid certain plants if deer frequent your property. We try to warn customers selecting common arborvitae and yews that deer have a fondness for them and they may be planting 'deer food' instead of the hedge they were picturing. Along the same vein, some plants are marketed as 'deer resistant' and can make good choices for areas with deer problems. Barberry and Potentilla are commonly thought of as less appealing to deer. Please note that 'deer resistant' is not 'deer proof'. There simply is no such plant. A more complete list of 'deer resistant' plants is on the reverse of this sheet.

Physical barriers are another way to avoid deer problems. This means fencing, something that is not practical for all properties or gardeners. Fencing must be at least 6' high to be effective and must be higher if the deer would approach it from uphill and jump downhill to cross it. Electric fence can be effective to protect vegetable gardens or other small areas. Be sure to string two strands, one 3' off the ground and another below at 1' high.

Other kinds of physical barriers include the practice of laying wire fence flat on the ground in front of beds. The fence must have a mesh size of 1-2" to be effective. The theory is that the hoofed deer is uncomfortable walking on the fence and will avoid the area. This method might be effective to protect a bed of spring tulips and is easily removed later.

Motion sensitive lights are not effective. Our experience is that deer become used to them. Motion sensitive sprinklers do appear to be effective. Dogs rarely make effective guardians and it is important to note that setting domestic dogs loose on wildlife can have serious consequences. Deer do tend to be creatures of habit and regular hazing, yelling, making noise, as they make their rounds can disrupt their routines but this is usually only a temporary solution and does not help with the typical 'midnight raids'.

The most widely used deterrents are chemical barriers. This includes homemade concoctions, most of which use common ingredients such as eggs, hot pepper or garlic and store bought products such as Deer Away®. Effectiveness varies and all types need to be reapplied after rain or snowfall. In addition, some can be too smelly to use close to the house. One commonly cited chemical barrier is the bath soap, Irish Spring®, original scent. Place whole bars in shrubs or tree branches and deer are said to be repelled. The garden soil amendment, blood meal, is also often recommended. Scatter it on the ground around plantings. All these mixtures and remedies have varying success; deer in one location may be deterred while in another spot they may not. They all operate on the basis of offending the deer with nasty or human scents. They seem to get used to most scents with time if they do not associate it anything bad happening to them. At Plant Land, we do not recommend any specific formula but most are not harmful and may prove useful for you. Try them

all and if you ever find one that really works 100% of the time, plan to retire soon and rich.

We sometimes recommend that gardeners pick their battles in areas badly overrun with deer. A portion of the yard may need to be fenced to provide an area that is off limits. Prized or very special plants may need barriers applied every evening without fail. Certain areas and some plants may have to be sacrificed to allow the gardener to win at least some of the fight. We can help you make good plant choices and choose deterrent methods that suit you and your property best.