

Deer and our neighborhoods

Deer have become a fact of life in urban areas. While some people enjoy deer in and around their yards, others are dismayed by the costly damage to their trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables.

Because native plants are scarce and agriculture crops are not available, the home landscape has become a major food source for a deer. Those plants you bought and lovingly planted can be gracing your yard one day and be gone the next.

Here are some suggestions to protect your plants:

Flowers

Least likely to be eaten

- Bergamont
- Butterflyweed
- Goldenrods
- Joe Pye Weed
- Lavendar
- Lily of the Valley
- Milkweed
- Mint Tansy
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Yarrow

Most likely to be eaten

- Daylillies
- Geraniums
- Hosta
- Impatiens
- Lillies
- Roses
- Tulips
- Violets
- Most vegetables

Shrubs

Least likely to be eaten

- Barberry
- Boxwood
- Coralberry
- Cotoneaster
- Forsythia
- Honeysuckle
- Junipers
- Lilacs
- Nannyberry Viburnum
- Potentilla
- Snowberry
- Spirea
- Sumac

Most likely to be eaten

- Arborvitae
- Arrowwood
- Euonymous
- Dogwood
- Serviceberry
- Viburnum

Trees

Least likely to be eaten

- Ash
- Black Locust
- Coffeetree
- Elm
- Hackberry
- Hawthorn
- Honeylocust
- Oak
- River Birch
- Spruce

Most likely to be eaten

- Apple
- Balsam Fir
- Basswood
- Cedars
- Crabapples
- Maples
- Mountain Ash

Planting strategies

To reduce the likelihood of extensive landscape damage, try planting trees, shrubs and flowers that are less attractive to deer. Be aware, however, that a hungry deer will eat almost anything.

Protecting your plants

Chemical repellants or fencing offers the most effective protections against deer. Motion detector lights and sound alarms are not effective in deterring deer.

Repellants

Repellants are liquids or powders that have an odor or taste that is offensive to deer. Repellants are likely to reduce the damage caused by deer; however, some damage may still occur if deer are very hungry. Repellants can be purchased at most nurseries and hardware stores.

Hinder: This is a liquid odor repellent that you spray on plants. Because it washes off after a rainfall and lawn sprinkling, repeated application is needed. Hinder is approved for use on food crops and ornamental plants.

Bobbex: Liquid odor repellent that uses six ingredients as repellants. Bobbex can be used on vegetables too.

Deer-Away/BGR: This is an odor repellent that resists washing off and under normal circumstances, will protect your plants for about two months. The spray is available in both liquid and powder form which mixes with water. This repellent is not approved for use on any plant intended to be eaten by humans.

Home remedies: These are not always reliable; however, you could try placing human hair, dog hair or unwrapped soap in mesh bags and hanging the bags 25 to 30 inches above the ground.

Not recommended: Blood meal, hot sauce, Magic Circle, Ropel and Thiram. These have not been proven to be effective deer repellants.

Fencing

Although an adult deer can easily jump a six foot fence, homeowners can try fencing vegetable gardens. City ordinance limits fences in residential neighborhoods to six-feet high in backyards and 42-inches in front yards. Remember that a permit is required to install a fence and all city ordinance requirements must be followed.

Protecting trees from antlers

In the autumn, deer can harm young trees when they rub antlers against the tree bark during mating season. To protect a small tree, place a piece of corrugated plastic drain pipe around the trunk. Drain pipe is inexpensive and available at hardware and home improvement stores. Just buy a section of pipe that is high enough to reach from the ground to the lowest branch. Cut the pipe down the entire length and pry it open and place it around a tree.

The drain pipe will also protect your trees against sunscald during the winter. You can either remove the pipe in the early spring or you can leave it on year-round; keep checking on the tree's growth. Remove the pipe when it's snug around the tree or the tree diameter reaches 6 inches; otherwise, the pipe will strangle the tree. If you wrap trees with paper tree wrap, you must remove the wrap by April or May. Paper tree wrap in warm weather creates a moist, warm area that attracts insects and fungus.

Feeding the deer violates the law

Because of the landscape damage and the rising incidences of car/deer collisions, St. Louis Park city ordinance prohibits individuals from intentionally feeding deer on either private or public property. Feeding deer attracts them away from their normal habitat; it also attracts raccoons and other nuisance critters.

For more information, contact:

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