

**“Deer Proofing” Your Garden**  
**10/03/09**  
**Robin Lee-Cronin**

Deer & Plant list

At Rutgers Nursery we have a deer resistant list available for customers. This list has the most deer resistant plants. If you can tolerate some degree of deer damage you can choose from a larger list of plants.

Each situation is unique. The size of the deer population will usually determine the extent of the problem and if the home is located in a wooded area, new construction, and deer paths.

Also consider environmental factors such as drought and location of plants.

Finding the right defense can be difficult but here at Rutgers we can help to find the best answers for this problem.

Using several methods together can be helpful.

Physical Barriers

- 1) Electric fencing costs \$200/1,000 sq foot.
- 2) Double fencing methods. This is when two fences are built, outside fence is 8' tall and the second is 3' tall just inside the first fence. The fences are at the same time, which confuses them and can deter them from jumping the fences. They have been known to jump 8' fences.
- 3) Farmers in Hunterdon County suggest a 5' fence with 2' of wire on top with streamers on top.
- 4) Fencing or caging individual plants.
- 5) Deer netting can be used to cover the entire plant or garden area.
- 6) Planting deer resistant plants around others plants that are not as resistant i.e., Rose Glow Barberry around Oak Leaf Hydrangea.

Repellants

There are premixed sprays that are applied directly to the plants, (always follow manufacturers instruction when applying) Liquid Fence Deer and Rabbit Repellent. (Handout)

Sprays deter deer by either unpleasant smell or taste. You can purchase an additive to mix with it called Spreader Sticker, which will help any product stick better to the plants.

## DEER AGENDA

- I- INCONVENIENCES BROUGHT ON BY DEER
- II- DAMAGES CAUSED BY DEER
- III- UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEMS
- IV- WHAT DO THE DEER LIKE TO EAT? AND NOT LIKE?
- V- WHEN DO THEY CAUSE THE MOST PROBLEMS?
- VI- WHAT YOU CAN DO....TOP TEN LIST

INCONVENIENCES BROUGHT ON BY DEER

**“ Just like any wild animal, deer will behave in ways that occasionally inconvenience people. ”**

**Damages are ineradicable as long as we choose to live near wildlife**

**Our immediate area is one of the worst areas in the entire country**

## DAMAGES CAUSED BY DEER

**Deer damage all classes of Plants ( Expensive Ornamentals, Vegetable Crops, Fruit Trees)**

**They even damage our CARS!**

**Each year over 10,000 deer carcasses are picked up off our New Jersey Roads**

**There are more deer (150,000-170,000) in New Jersey then people in the combined counties of Hunterdon, Warren, Burlington, Cape May, Salem and Sussex County!**

**Even though these problems appear to be on the increase, there is no reason to think that such problems cannot be reduced to a significant degree.**

**Many people comfortably live in regions highly populated by deer.**

**These people maintain beautiful ornamentals and bountiful vegetable gardens and safely drive rural roads.**

**These people have learned to tolerate deer and cope with the limited way in which they inconvenience our lives.**

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEMS

**An understanding of animal behavior will put you on the path in resolving your problems.**

**Deer are opportunistic feeders, capable of utilizing hundreds of plant species and incapable of recognizing property boundaries.**

**Because of this, any new home that's built in prime deer habitat will eventually be investigated and tested.**

**If the deer like the human-modified environment, they will establish a feeding pattern.**

**Believe it or not, a mature forest is not deer habitat.**

(A forest consisting of large trees, which act to shade the forest floor and deprive young trees and shrubs of life-giving sunlight, offers little for deer to feed on)

**HOWEVER! The deer do love the edges of the forest. Which is usually where your home is located!**

(Deer like the areas where sunlight reaches the ground here; it provides palatable and available plants for deer. So..... Putting a house or housing development in the middle of a large expanse of mature forest will create a favorable environment for deer, by creating much "edge" habitat.

## WHAT DO THE DEER LIKE TO EAT MOST? AND NOT LIKE MOST?

**A concern is the palatability of plants.**

(When we unknowingly choose varieties of plants that are more appealing than a deer's regular menu of native species, we are inviting trouble)

**Palatability studies indicate that deer prefer certain ornamentals to others.**

**Deer prefer succulent plants**

**And, in some situations, certain ornamentals are not preferred by deer at all.**

## *FREQUENTLY DAMAGED PLANTS*

### TREES

Balsam Fir  
Japanese Maple  
Norway Maple  
Atlas Cedar  
Hemlock  
Fringe Tree  
Leyland Cypress  
European Ash  
Nellie Stevens Holly  
Goldenrain Tree  
Saucer Magnolia  
Apple and Crabapple  
Cherry and Plum  
White Pine  
Pear  
Arborvitae

### SHRUBS & CLIMBERS

Quince  
Clematis  
Cornellian Cherry Dogwood  
Winged Euonymus  
Wintercreeper  
Bigleaf Hydrangea  
Oakleaf Hydrangea  
Chinese Holly  
Messerve Holly  
Common Winterberry  
Yew  
Azalea  
Rhododendron  
Hybrid Roses  
Blackberry & Raspberry  
European Mountain Ash  
Highbush Blueberry

### ANNUALS, BULBS & PERENNIALS

Bishop's Weed  
Periwinkle  
Japanese Painted Fern  
Wallflower  
English Ivy  
Sunflower  
Hosta  
Daylily  
Pansies & Violets  
Lily  
Stock  
Geranium  
Solomon's Seal  
Buttercup  
Trillium  
Tulips

***EXTREMELY DEER RESISTANT PLANTS***  
***( For Landscape Designs )***

BARBERRY

BUDDLEA

BOXWOOD

CYPRESS, GOLD THREAD

CARYOPTERIS ( Blue Mist )

COREOPSIS

GRASSES

JUNIPER

NEPETA

PIERIS JAPONICA (JAPANESE ANDROMEDA)

PACHYSANDRA

SALVIA

SPIREA

SPRUCE

VIBURNUM

## WHEN DO THEY CAUSE THE MOST PROBLEMS?

Deer damage is basically seasonal.

Garden damage, obviously, occurs in late spring, summer, and early fall – the growing season.

Browsing of ornamental plants around the house is almost solely a winter problem. (January through March)

From April through June, grass shoots and fresh leaves are available for deer. (Deer seem to PREFER these FRESH FOODS over most other plants, even ornamental species)

This does not mean they won't wander into your garden and SAMPLE THINGS! (If they do happen to wander into your garden, they will no doubt sample some of the plants. It is during this time that gardeners must take care, because once deer identify your garden as a potential food source, they WILL RETURN.)

The least troublesome time for deer is July through September – a time when wildlife foods are readily available.

(Deer are often broken into groups of only a few individuals, and Doe's with Fawns move less at this time. Bucks also move infrequently, since their freshly sprouted velvet antlers are painfully delicate and damage easily when bumped against tree branches or other structures. Thus, deer are dispersed and their consumption is not concentrated, spreading out their impact.)

October is the "Rutting" (Mating) Season. This combined with the availability of mast (acorns, beechnuts, and other wild nuts) make the likelihood of damage to plants minimal

(The bucks have polished the velvet from their now hardened antlers and are preparing for the autumn breeding season, known as the rut. Deer are more active and less cautious than usual. Last spring's Fawns are feeding more on vegetation instead of their mothers milk; this freedom from their young allows the Doe's to begin preparation for the rut.)

By early winter, the situation is quite different! Wild plants are dry and leafless and no doubt less palatable. Deer need food!

(Many deer are physically drained from the rut and in search of increasingly sparse food supplies. If the mast crop was light, most of the wild nuts may have already been eaten by deer, squirrels, raccoons, turkeys, grouse, or other wild animals. Deer also gather into larger groups during winter, and devour gardens.)

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**Given these circumstances, it is little wonder that deer can sometimes cause severe damage to ornamentals in winter.**

**Ornamental species, like holly trees, rhododendrons and yews, may be the only available green, leafy vegetation (and are succulent plants). .**

**Thus, for most homeowners, the winter months are the worst for deer damage. As such, repellents, fencing, or other damage prevention techniques need to be only temporary.**

**By April, fresh native vegetation will be available again, and deer problems should dramatically decline at this time.**

## **THE TOP 10 WAYS TO MINIMIZE DEER DAMAGE**

1. Use plants that are listed on the Rutgers Nursery Deer Resistant List.
2. Use plants that are very coarse in texture or hurt to touch.
3. Use plants that have a slight foul odor when you get very close to them.
4. Use plants that are blue/gray in color or have yellow needles.
5. Use masses of large evergreens (6ft. and up) in rows of 2 to 3.
6. Protect plants that are susceptible to deer damage by surrounding them with plants that are deer resistant.
7. Use larger trees that deer can't reach the leaves to eat.
8. Dogs, animal urine and busy areas prevent damage. (ASK BARTLET ABOUT THEIR SERVICES FOR THIS VERY EFFECTIVE TREATMENT)
9. Plant larger trees and install fencing around trunks of flowering and shade trees.
10. Prune larger plants into tree form to keep deer from eating.