

## Oh No, Deer

White tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*, have become quite a destructive nuisance in the New England garden. It is estimated that an acre of land can support between 18-24 deer but there are areas in the Northeast where animal census has reported over 150 deer per acre. It is hard to believe that such a sweet faced creature can cause so much damage to the garden not to mention the damage they cause to commercial growers and automobiles. Deer are simply trying to survive when they eat from the smorgasbord you have laid out so carefully and beautifully for them. They are not out to destroy your garden, they are just hungry. I find the the snow cover of winter is the time of peak grazing from the deer and subsequently more damage is seen at this time of year when other food sources are less available to the deer.

There are several methods you can use to deter deer from dining on your ornamental trees, shrubs and perennials. You should consider how much damage is acceptable and what the monetary limits are to your budget and, if you are planning a garden, refer to the list of deer resistant plants to make the the garden less desirable to the deer.

Fencing is the answer to a totally deer proof yard. The most effective fencing would be six feet high with a thirty degree angle away from the garden or a seven to ten foot high, strait fence. Deer do not like to try to jump something which may entangle them. Electric fencing can prove effective but again, it should be high enough for a deer to be unable to jump it which is nine to ten feet.

There are various 'scare' products on the market which involve noise, sound and water. These can be effective but deer are smart and can figure these out so their effectiveness might be short lived.

There are many repellents on the market and many are quite effective. They work by scent, taste, noise and visually to deter deer from grazing. We recommend our product, Oh no, Deer which has a rather pleasant scent to us humans but which deer find distasteful. They make take one bite and decide to move on or, the scent may deter them completely. You will have to apply Oh no, Deer every two to three weeks during seasons of high grazing and it should be reapplied after heavy rains. Diligence is necessary with any scent product.

There are products which employ high frequency sounds to deter deer. Some people place a radio in the garden. Deer can get used to these products. Another system employs a strong jet of water or a sprinkler system which is activated by a motion detector. This will scare the deer when they enter the area which is protected by these devices. These products can be quite costly.

You can hang strips of white cloth to mimic the 'flagging' of the deer's tail which is a sign of danger and alert. Once again, deer can become used to these visual stimulants.

You should employ several different methods mentioned above to repel deer from your garden such as the use of deer resistant plants combined with Oh no, deer. We need to learn to live with a bit of tolerance for our four legged friends and to send them off to another patch of greenery for their culinary needs.

### Listing of Deer Resistant Plants

#### Trees

Acer saccharinum – Silver Maple and most maples  
Betula species- Birch  
Cornus kousa – Chinese Dogwood  
Crataegus species – Hawthornes  
Cryptomeria japonica – Japanese Cedar  
Fraxinus species – Ash  
Gleditsia triacanthos – Honey locust  
Pinus strobus – White pine

#### Shrubs

Amelanchier canadensis – Serviceberry  
Berberis species – Barberry  
Buxus species – Boxwood  
Caryopteris species – Blue Beard  
Clethra species – Sweet pepperbush  
Cornus stolonifera – Red osier dogwood  
Cotinus coggygria – Smokebush  
Cotoneaster species - Cotoneaster  
Enkianthus campanulatus – Red vein enkianthus  
Myrica pennsylvanica – Bayberry  
Pieris japonica and floribunda – Japanese and mountain pieris  
Potentilla suffruticosa – Cinquefoil  
Spirea species – Spirea

#### Perennials

Achillea - Yarrow  
Aconitum - Monkshood  
Allium – Onion family  
Aquilegia - Columbine  
Artemisia - Artemisia  
Astilbe - Astilbe  
Calendula - Pot marigold  
Coreopsis - tickseed  
Delphinium - Delphinium  
Dicentra – Bleeding heart  
Digitalis - Foxglove  
Gaillardia – Blanket Flower  
Helleborus – Christmas rose/lenten rose  
Iris - Iris  
Lupinus - Lupine  
Mentha - Mint  
Narcissus - Daffodil  
Nepeta - Catmint  
Paeonia - Peony  
Papaver - Poppy  
Perovskia - Russian sage  
Salvia – Sage  
Trillium - Trillium

This is not a complete list but should give you a start with deerproofing your garden.

Sources:

Hart, Rhonda Massingham. (2005). *Deerproofing Your Yard & Garden*. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing