

Mostly Natives



Photo by Gail Paradise

Gardening with Deer

An increasing problem for many gardeners is the presence of deer. These herbivores are browsers by nature and much prefer a tender and well watered rose bush to the tough grass on the surrounding hills. There are two directions that one can go to alleviate the problem. First, one can fence them out with a tall fence or impenetrable hedge or two lower fences or hedges. Second, one can accept their presence and try to minimize the damage. If you're interested in fences there's a publication, 'A Gardeners Guide to Preventing Deer Damage' put out by the California Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife Management Division, Deer Program, which has various fencing solutions. If you want to take the second approach, read on.

The ideal solution to having a deer free back yard of course is to have a resident mountain lion but this isn't always practical. There are, however, several tricks to try. Often the deer, especially in the fall, are looking for water. Some gardeners have found that by supplying a source of water the deer will stop for a drink and then move on. There are also several sprays and powders on the market which are quite effective if regularly renewed. Fall is usually the time that deer will do the most damage in the garden as by then the surrounding hills are quite dry and offer little sustenance. If you're adding new plants at this time it's best to screen them or protect them with one of the deer sprays. Even plants that are quite deer resistant once established are seen as delicacies when coming straight from a nursery.

There is no such thing as a deer proof plant. Some deer somewhere has eaten everything that we know of including poisonous plants. There are, however, levels of deer resistance. The following list has been compiled from much experience by both us and our customers. The plants with a number 1 are the most resistant, the plants with 2 are next, etc. Experiment, that is after all one of the joys of gardening. Deer in some areas eat plants that are quite resistant in other places. And get your neighbors to garden too. The more plants that are available the less the damage to each one and the more choices everyone will have. If all else fails there's always the plastic and silk varieties that have the added benefit of not needing to be watered. Good luck!

Deer Resistant Plants 1=best, 2=next best, 3=worth trying

<p>TREES Cupressus (Monterey Cypress) 1 Pinus (Pine) 2 Quercus agrifolia (Coast Live Oak) 2 Sequoia (Redwood) 2</p> <p>SHRUBS Arctostaphylos (Manzanita) 3 Baccharis pilularis(Coyote Bush) 1 Berberis (Barberry) 2 Buddleia (Butterfly Bush) 2 Carpenteria (Bush Anemone) 2 Ceanothus Blue Jeans 1 Ceanothus Concha 2 Ceanothus Dark Star, Julia Phelps 2 Ceanothus gloriosus 1 Ceratostigma griffithii 2 Cistus salviifolius, sunset 1 Cistus Santa Cruz, skanbergii 2 Cistus purpureus, ladanifer 3 Coleonema pluchrum 2 Coreopsis verticillata 2 Echium (Pride of Madeira) 1 Fremontodendron (Fremontia) 3</p>	<p>PERENNIALS Acorus (Sweet Flag) 2 Aquilega (Columbine) 2 Artemesia 3 Asteriscus maritimus (Gold Coin) 2 Coreopsis verticillata 3 Decentra (Western Bleeding Heart) 1 Diorama pulcherrimum 2 Dymondia margaretae 1 Erigeron glaucus 3 Erigeron karvinskianus 2 Erodium chamaedryoides 2 Euphorbia 2 Fuchsia thymifolia 3 Geranium 3 Heuchera (Alum Root) 3 Iris douglasiana 1 Iris hybrids 2J Juncus species 1 Lavandula 2 Limonium psidoclada 2 Lithodora diffusa 2 Muhlenbergia rigens (Deer Grass) 1 Nepeta (Catmint)1 Penstemon heterophyllus 2</p>
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Garrya elliptica 3	Penstemon heterophyllus 2
Grevillea 1	Penstemon varieties 3
Halimium (Dwarf Yellow Rockrose) 3	Perovskia (Russian Sage) 2
Heteromeles arbutifolia (Toyon) 3	Phlox subulata 2
Leptospermum scoparium 1	Polystichum munitum 2
Lupinus arboreus 1	Romneya coulteri (Matilija Poppy) 3
Mimulus a. (Monkey flower) 1	Salvia, perennials 3
Myrica californica 2	Santolina 1
Nandina (Heavenly Bamboo) 2	Schizostylis 2
Rhamnus californica (Coffeeberry) 2	Sedum spathulifolium 1
Rosa californica 3	Silene vulgaris maritima 2
Rosmarinus (Rosemary) 1	Sisyrinchium 1
Salvia clevelandii, leucantha 2	Solanum jasminoides (Potato Vine) 3
Westringia rosmariniformis 1	Stachys 2
ANNUALS	Stipa species 1
Clarkia 3	Teucrium 2
Eschscholtzia (Poppy) 3	Thyme 1
Nemophila menziesii (Baby Blue Eyes) 3	Verbena bonariensis 3
	Viola adunca, labradorica 2
	Zauschneria (California Fuchsia) 1

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Winning

Cheryl Merser

Best Ways to Keep Deer Out of Your Backyard

The least costly deer repellents are natural scents that deer dislike...

• **Bars of deodorant soap.** Leave the wrappers on the bars to protect them from rain. Drill a hole through each bar, and run a long length of string through the hole. Tie a knot at each end of the soap to hold it in place.

Then hang the long string of soaps from the trees at grazing level along the edges of your property. To be most effective, the soap bars should be strung at intervals of about 18 inches.

• **Hair cuttings.** Deer fear the smell of humans. Wrap hair cuttings from a local barbershop or salon in small mesh bags. String the bags from the trees the same way as described for the bars of soap.

COMMERCIAL REPELLENTS

There are four types of repellents that are made from ingredients that deer find especially distasteful...

• **Chew-Not**—contains fungicides.

• **Bobbex**—made with fish powder and oil.

• **Hinder**—made from ammonium soaps of high fatty acids.

All three of these can be purchased at garden supply stores. Chew-Not and Bobbex last through rain. Hinder, which also repels rabbits, needs to be reapplied after rain.

• **Milorganite** is a lawn fertilizer made from human waste and is not intended as a deer repellent. But it still works.

Spread milorganite on a lawn surrounding the shrubs you want to protect. Or create a border around the base of the plants.

Deer apparently find the smell unpleasant enough that they avoid it.

These repellents are most effective if they are rotated with each new application. Apply according to package instructions. ■

Bottom Line/Personal interviewed Cheryl Merser, contributor to *Garden Design* magazine and author of *The Garden Design Book* (HarperCollins).