

Deer Resistant Plants for your Yard¹

TREES: All trees are vulnerable to damage by deer, not just from them eating the leaves, but by bucks scraping their antlers on the trunk and branches. The most vulnerable trees are the thin bark trees, especially the aspens, and the younger/smaller trees. To protect them from deer, install a welded wire fence out as far as the drip line (extent of the branches). Many of our neighbors have installed protection with good aesthetics as well as effective fencing. As the trees grow older and form a coarse bark (unlike the aspen), they are less susceptible to damage.

Shrubs (the favorite picks):

Russian sage and potentilla, barberry, rabbit brush (a native), blue mist spirea (a favorite of mine), and boxwood. In general, most shrubs are very susceptible to deer browse.

Perennials² (the favorite picks): peony, lavender, lambs ear, coreopsis, iris, torch plants (i.e. red hot poker, aloe), yellow yarrow, coneflowers, black-eyed susan, hyssop (esp. hummingbird mint), native sunflowers, poppies, silver mound artemisia (an ornamental sage)

Ground Covers³ (the favorite picks): cilantro and many other herbs (i.e. thyme, catmint), lambs ear, ajuga, penstemon, small sage of many varieties, ornamental grasses, periwinkle (vinca), basket flower

Herbs/Flowers (the favorite picks): marigold, daisy, coneflower, oregano, thyme

Vines: trumpet vine and woodbine (Virginia creeper) were mentioned, but I have seen the deer eat them as well.

¹ There is no such thing as a “deer proof” plant as it has been experienced by our many neighbors. However, that depends upon how you approach the issue. This list is comprised of the most “resistant” varieties based upon our experiences here in the Pinery/Pradera/Stroh/Hidden Village, and surrounding area neighborhoods. In addition, protecting the most vulnerable plants (at a minimum) with wire fencing or some other method to “keep them from reaching” the plant is a very good idea. Allowing the deer to feel at home and comfortable in your yard will reveal how much they really like your plants.

² Especially the lavender, yellow, and blue colored flowering varieties

³ Many of these perennials and groundcovers are excellent choices for you xeriscape beds and gardens.

Some Comments by survey participants:⁴

...“They have gotten all my other stuff including daisies, marigolds, yarrow, black eyed Susan's, cone flowers, ate my lilacs to the ground. They eat pretty much everything, maybe not one year because they ate at the neighbors before they wandered in but then you might be first the next year. My neighbor said they ate her Iris's so you never know.”

... “They used to pull up any and all seedlings even if they weren't eaten thereby killing them all before I relegated all flowers to hanging baskets. Over 32 years in The Pinery, deer have destroyed my vegetable and flower gardens each and every year in spite of all manner of planning, plantings, and protections on my part. If they'd only eat the weeds and yuccas, I'd be happy!”

... “Don't plant roses.”

... “Anything that smells very strong of an herb type. I have also found a liquid detergent that has oregano and rosemary oil. Deer Stop. I order it online.”

... “Rocks!!! What they don't eat the bunnies have been nibbling on. Most success with Irises, lavender, peonies and Russian sage. They usually don't like any plants with scent...” I treat everything with liquid fence deer repellent, but you have to stay on top of it, (weekly or more depending on moisture). They or the bunnies ate the marigolds and pulled out my dianthus. I am planting more ornamental grasses. Fencing the flowers.”

“They've eaten everything that's supposed to be deer resistant and if they haven't eaten it they've pulled it out by the roots or shredded it, even fake plants haven't survived”

“They love hostas.”

“They have started eating my salvia the past few years.”

“They've been eating my salvia!”

“I have noticed that both deer and rabbits will often taste anything freshly planted. It may be because nursery plants have been tantalizingly over fertilized.”

⁴ Note that some people have good luck with certain plants and others do not. Again, it depends upon how comfortable and hungry the deer are in the yard and what “preventive measures” you may have taken to discourage them.

“Lightly spraying your flowers and plants with a cayenne pepper spray keeps deer off them completely (and does not harm them). It works fantastically! 5 tsp cayenne pepper 1 teaspoon castile soap (e.g. dr. bronners) 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil 6 cloves of garlic 1/2 gallon water 1. Blend ingredients together using 2-3 cups of water in the blender, and when finished blending, add the rest of the water. 2. Strain the liquid into a spray bottle. Instead of cayenne pepper, you can use crushed habaneros or chili powder. As long as it's hot!”

“After living here 20 years, the only perennials I have found that they don't eat are daffodils & iris.”

IN ADDITION, DO NOT FEED THE DEER

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