



Columbia Nursery

Dealing with Deer: Tips for Protecting Your Landscape

At Columbia Nursery, one of the questions we hear most often is, "How do I keep deer from eating my plants?" If you've lived in this valley for any length of time, you know the white-tailed deer are everywhere—and they love to snack on gardens and landscaping.

Unfortunately, there's no one-size-fits-all solution, but there are several strategies you can use to minimize damage and keep your yard from becoming an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Step One: Don't Invite Them In

The first rule of deer management is simple: don't encourage them to visit. Feeding deer—whether it's tossing them hay in winter or leaving food scraps nearby—teaches them that your property is a reliable food source. Once they've learned that lesson, your flowers, shrubs, and trees are next on the menu.

Choose Plants Wisely

Some plants are like candy to deer, while others are usually left alone. For example, arborvitae and yews are frequent targets, often turning into "deer food" rather than the privacy hedge you had in mind.

On the flip side, plants like Barberry and Potentilla are generally considered deer resistant, but remember—**deer resistant doesn't mean deer proof**. A hungry deer will try just about anything, especially in a tough winter.

We keep an updated list of plants that deer **tend to avoid**, although these are just generalities that have been observed in the garden & landscape community. No plant is 100% deer proof. Ask us for a copy!

Sometimes You Have to Pick Your Battles

If you live in an area heavily populated by deer, it may not be realistic to protect every plant in your yard. Many gardeners find success by fencing off a section of the property for their most prized plants and letting the rest go a bit wild. For extra-special trees or shrubs or plants, you might need to put up protective barriers—sometimes every single night. It's not ideal, but it's better than losing everything.

Fencing: The Most Reliable Barrier

When it comes to physical protection, fencing is the most dependable option—but it's not always practical. For deer, a fence needs to be at least 6 feet tall, and even taller if you're on a slope where they can jump downhill over it.

For smaller areas, like vegetable gardens, electric fencing can work well. We recommend running two wires—one about 12 inches off the ground and the other at about 36 inches.

Another trick is to lay wire mesh fencing (w/a mesh of 1-2") flat on the ground in front of garden beds. Deer don't like walking on it because it feels unstable under their hooves. This method works especially well for protecting tender plants like tulips and can be removed easily once the danger has passed.



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What About Other Deterrents?

- Motion lights: Deer quickly get used to them and stop caring.
- Motion-activated sprinklers: These tend to work better and can startle deer enough to change their path.
- Dogs: Sadly, most pet dogs aren't effective deer guards—and letting pets harass wildlife isn't a good idea for the animals or your dog.
- Noise & Hazing: Yelling or making loud noises when you see deer can break their routines temporarily, but it won't stop the classic "midnight raid".

Scent or Chemical Based Deterrents Worth a Try

Many gardeners try homemade or store-bought repellents that use strong smells to drive deer away. Ingredients like eggs, garlic, hot pepper, or products like Plant Skydd® or Deer Scram® are commonly used.

Some folks swear by hanging bars of Irish Spring® soap in their shrubs or sprinkling blood meal around their plantings. These methods have mixed results. What works in one neighborhood might do nothing in another. Deer are smart, and if nothing bad happens when they smell something unusual, they'll often learn to ignore it.

We *don't guarantee* any one formula at Columbia Nursery but offer a few products that have been found to be effective. If you happen to find the secret recipe that works 100% of the time—let us know so we can all retire early!

Recommended Products

Plantskydd® – a blood-based product available in liquid, powder & granular form. Our landscapers favorite. Not recommended if you also have a bear population in your area.

Deer Scram® – a granular product sprinkled in area you are trying to protect.

I Must Garden Deer Spray® (available in Spice or Mint) – regular use required to be effective.

Repellex® – a systemic product applied in soil. Plants uptake the product which makes it taste bad to deer. Generally 1 year protection.

Let Us Help!

Dealing with deer is about strategy, persistence, and sometimes a little compromise. We're happy to help you choose the best plants for your property and recommend deterrent options that fit your specific needs. Stop by Columbia Nursery—we're always here to help you win at least part of the battle.



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Deer Resistant Annuals

Common Name	Latin Name
<i>Ageratum</i>	<i>Ageratum houstonianum</i>
<i>Angelonia</i>	<i>Angelonia angustifolia</i>
<i>Black-Eyed Susan</i>	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>
<i>Canna Lily</i>	<i>Canna indica</i>
<i>Cosmos</i>	<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>
<i>Dusty Miller</i>	<i>Senecio cineraria</i>
<i>Fan Flower</i>	<i>Scaevola aemula</i>
<i>Felicia Daisy</i>	<i>Felicia amelloides</i>
<i>Flowering Tobacco</i>	<i>Nicotiana glauca</i>
<i>Forget-Me-Not</i>	<i>Myosotis sylvatica</i>
<i>Geraniums (Zonal)</i>	<i>Pelargonium × hortorum</i>
<i>Globe Amaranth</i>	<i>Gomphrena globosa</i>
<i>Greek Oregano</i>	<i>Origanum vulgare subsp. hirtum</i>
<i>Heliotrope</i>	<i>Heliotropium arborescens</i>
<i>Lantana</i>	<i>Lantana camara</i>
<i>Licorice Plant</i>	<i>Helichrysum petiolare</i>
<i>Marguerite Daisy</i>	<i>Argyranthemum frutescens</i>
<i>Marigold</i>	<i>Tagetes spp.</i>
<i>Nasturtium</i>	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>
<i>Persian Shield</i>	<i>Strobilanthes dyerianus</i>
<i>Pot Marigold</i>	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>
<i>Rosemary (annual in 3-5)</i>	<i>Salvia rosmarinus</i>
<i>Sage (annual use)</i>	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>
<i>Salvia</i>	<i>Salvia splendens</i>
<i>Snapdragon</i>	<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>
<i>Spider Flower</i>	<i>Cleome hassleriana</i>
<i>Strawflower</i>	<i>Helichrysum bracteatum</i>
<i>Swan River Daisy</i>	<i>Brachyscome iberidifolia</i>
<i>Sweet Alyssum</i>	<i>Lobularia maritima</i>
<i>Sweet William</i>	<i>Dianthus barbatus</i>
<i>Thyme (annual use)</i>	<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>
<i>Verbena</i>	<i>Verbena x hybrida</i>
<i>Vinca (Trailing)</i>	<i>Vinca major</i>
<i>Wishbone Flower</i>	<i>Torenia fournieri</i>
<i>Zinnia</i>	<i>Zinnia elegans</i>

Deer Resistant Perennials

Common Name	Latin Name
<i>All Ferns</i>	<i>Various genera</i>
<i>Anemone</i>	<i>Anemone spp.</i>
<i>Artemisia</i>	<i>Artemisia spp.</i>



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<i>Aster</i>	<i>Aster spp.</i>
<i>Astilbe</i>	<i>Astilbe spp.</i>
<i>Bachelor Button</i>	<i>Centaurea montana</i>
<i>Basket of Gold Alyssum</i>	<i>Aurinia saxatilis</i>
<i>Bee Balm</i>	<i>Monarda didyma</i>
<i>Bellflower</i>	<i>Campanula spp.</i>
<i>Black Eyed Susan</i>	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>
<i>Black Snakeroot</i>	<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i>
<i>Blanket Flower</i>	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>
<i>Bleeding Hearts</i>	<i>Dicentra spectabilis</i>
<i>Brunnera</i>	<i>Brunnera macrophylla</i>
<i>Bugleweed</i>	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>
<i>Butterfly Weed</i>	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
<i>Cardinal Flower</i>	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>
<i>Catmint</i>	<i>Nepeta faassenii</i>
<i>Columbine</i>	<i>Aquilegia spp.</i>
<i>Coneflower</i>	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>
<i>Coral Bells</i>	<i>Heuchera spp.</i>
<i>Coreopsis</i>	<i>Coreopsis spp.</i>
<i>Creeping Phlox</i>	<i>Phlox subulata</i>
<i>Daffodils</i>	<i>Narcissus spp.</i>
<i>Daylily</i>	<i>Hemerocallis spp.</i>
<i>Dead Nettle</i>	<i>Lamium maculatum</i>
<i>Dianthus</i>	<i>Dianthus spp.</i>
<i>False Indigo</i>	<i>Baptisia spp.</i>
<i>Forget-Me-Not</i>	<i>Myosotis sylvatica</i>
<i>Foxglove</i>	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
<i>Globe Thistle</i>	<i>Echinops ritro</i>
<i>Goatsbeard</i>	<i>Aruncus dioicus</i>
<i>Hardy Geranium</i>	<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>
<i>Japanese Spurge</i>	<i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>
<i>Jupiter's Beard</i>	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>
<i>Lady's Mantle</i>	<i>Alchemilla mollis</i>
<i>Lamb's Ears</i>	<i>Stachys byzantina</i>
<i>Lavender</i>	<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>
<i>Lenten Rose</i>	<i>Helleborus spp.</i>
<i>Ligularia</i>	<i>Ligularia spp.</i>
<i>Lily of the Valley</i>	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>
<i>Lungwort</i>	<i>Pulmonaria spp.</i>
<i>Lupine</i>	<i>Lupinus spp.</i>
<i>Monkshood</i>	<i>Aconitum napellus</i>
<i>Myrtle or Periwinkle</i>	<i>Vinca minor</i>
<i>Ornamental Grasses</i>	<i>Various genera</i>
<i>Ornamental Onion</i>	<i>Allium spp.</i>



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<i>Peony</i>	<i>Paeonia spp.</i>
<i>Pincushion Flower</i>	<i>Scabiosa spp.</i>
<i>Poppies</i>	<i>Papaver orientale</i>
<i>Rose Campion</i>	<i>Lychnis coronaria</i>
<i>Russian Sage</i>	<i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i>
<i>Sage</i>	<i>Salvia nemorosa</i>
<i>Sea Holly</i>	<i>Eryngium spp.</i>
<i>Sedum</i>	<i>Sedum spp.</i>
<i>Siberian Iris</i>	<i>Iris sibirica</i>
<i>Snow in Summer</i>	<i>Cerastium tomentosum</i>
<i>Snow on the Mountain</i>	<i>Ageratum</i>
<i>Snow on the Mountain</i>	<i>Euphorbia marginata</i>
<i>Speedwell</i>	<i>Veronica spp.</i>
<i>Spurge</i>	<i>Euphorbia spp.</i>
<i>Sweet Woodruff</i>	<i>Galium odoratum</i>
<i>Thyme</i>	<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>
<i>Yarrow</i>	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>

Deer Resistant Shrubs

Common Name	Latin Name
<i>Barberry</i>	<i>Berberis spp.</i>
<i>Bluebeard</i>	<i>Caryopteris × clandonensis</i>
<i>Bush Honeysuckle</i>	<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>
<i>Butterfly Bush</i>	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>
<i>Caragana (Peashrub)</i>	<i>Caragana arborescens</i>
<i>Clematis</i>	<i>Clematis spp.</i>
<i>Common Boxwood</i>	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>
<i>Cotoneaster</i>	<i>Cotoneaster spp.</i>
<i>Dogwood (Shrub types)</i>	<i>Cornus sericea, Cornus alba</i>
<i>Elderberry</i>	<i>Sambucus spp.</i>
<i>English Holly</i>	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
<i>Fir</i>	<i>Abies spp.</i>
<i>Forsythia</i>	<i>Forsythia spp.</i>
<i>Honeysuckle (shrub type)</i>	<i>Lonicera spp.</i>
<i>Japanese Spirea</i>	<i>Spiraea japonica</i>
<i>Junipers</i>	<i>Juniperus spp.</i>
<i>Lilac</i>	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>
<i>Magnolia</i>	<i>Magnolia spp.</i>
<i>Mock Orange</i>	<i>Philadelphus spp.</i>
<i>Oregon Grape Holly</i>	<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>
<i>Pine</i>	<i>Pinus spp.</i>
<i>Potentilla</i>	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>
<i>Rugosa Rose</i>	<i>Rosa rugosa</i>
<i>Russian Olive</i>	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>



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Smokebush

Spruce

Sumac

Trumpet Vine

Viburnum (all types)

Weigela

Cotinus coggygria

Picea spp.

Rhus typhina, Rhus aromatica

Campsis radicans

Viburnum spp.

Weigela florida

Deer Resistant Trees

Common Name

Green Ash

Hawthorn

Maple

Mountain Ash

Pine

Spruce

Latin Name

Fraxinus pennsylvanica

Crataegus spp.

Acer spp.

Sorbus aucuparia

Pinus spp.

Picea spp.