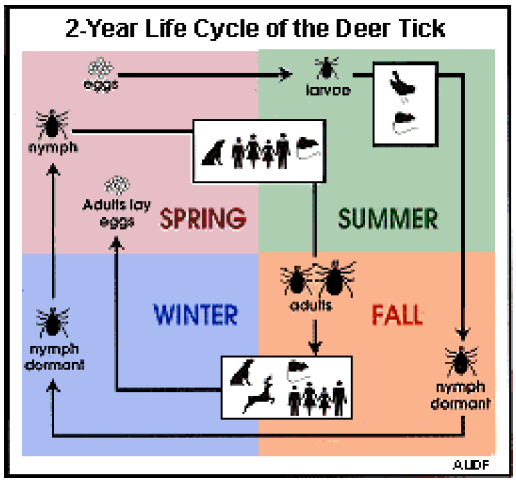
Dealing with Deer

Some of us gardeners remember back to our childhoods where the only place we would see Bambi was on the wide screen. During the past three decades deer gone from a Bambi-like mystic to an all too familiar destructive pest in local gardens. How many times has a homeowner wakened to find their prize hostas look like a row of celery stalks, where the deer have foraged on the tender parts of the plant? It is amazing that something as beautiful and graceful as a deer can be so destructive. As we have taken over more of the land they once reigned and removed their natural predators, deer have proven just how adaptable they are. In the selection of plants, there are none which are completely deer proof. If deer are hungry enough they will devour even the most distaste vegetation While we can spend a lot of time trying to keep the deer away from our plantings, we have to accept that the deer are not going to choose to starve to death just because our yards are noisy or we have sprayed our yards with repellents. Sometimes the best we will be able to do is encourage them to look elsewhere.



Not only are deer destructive to the gardens, they are involved in the life cycle of the tick which spreads Lyme disease. Mammals such as mice and deer provide a blood meal for the ticks through their various life stages. Ticks, small rodents, and other non-human vertebrate animals all serve as natural reservoirs for bacteria. This means that the Lyme disease bacteria can live and grow within these hosts without causing them to die. Larvae and nymph ticks typically become infected with the Lyme, when they feed on small animals that carry the bacteria in spring and summer. The bacteria remain in a tick as it changes from larva to nymph or from nymph to adult in late summer or early fall. Infected nymphs bite and transmit bacteria to other small rodents, mammals

Whether deer will target a particular plant species or variety depends on their previous habits and nutritional needs, plant palatability, seasonal factors, weather conditions, geographic area, and availability of alternative foods. Deer are creatures of habit, and previous movement patterns or foraging experiences can determine where damage will occur. Also, one plant species may be rarely damaged in one region or the country, but highly preferred in another due to differences in deer pressure and other factors. Examples of species with noted regional differences include holly, white pine, and deciduous magnolias. Therefore, caution must be taken when using plant preference lists from areas outside your own.

In general, damage from browsing is most severe when snow cover or extreme cold has reduced food availability. Another problem time is early spring when young succulent growth of ornamentals provides attractive browse before other spring growth is available. When food is in short supply, deer will browse even the most undesirable plants. Under such conditions, landscapers should combine damage control measures with careful plant selection. Damage control measures could include repellents, physical barriers (fencing), and deer population control. Ultimately, reducing the deer herd size is the most effective

There are various products and methods available to us, but they key is to find a way that not only works, but doesn't cost a fortune or detract from the beauty of the landscaping. There are various types of repellents and barriers, but repellents seem to be the best suited to the home landscape. Fencing is the most effective, but it doesn't always fit in with the aesthetics of our landscapes or our budgets.

Given the tremendous number of deer in urban areas, there has been a lot of research done on repellents. They all repel by tasting horrible, smelling offensive or both. After all the research, the only general conclusion seems to be that all of them work some of the time, but none of them works all of the time.

Various measures people have used to repel deer include human or carnivore urine, eggs mixed with water and hot peppers and sprayed on vegetation, human hair and bars of soap. Very few work either because deer become accustomed to the scent or the scent dissipates after a heavy rain.

Plants Deer Usually Avoid Eating			
Annuals			
Ageratum	Snapdragons	Wax Begonias*	Cleome
Dahlia	Polka Dot	Sweet Alyssum	Heliotrope
Lantana	Marigolds	Zinnias	Verbena
Dusty Miller			
Perennials			
Yarrow	Monkshood	Artemisia	Baptisia
Chrysanthemums	Foxgloves	Columbine	Lavender
Mints	Monarda	Ferns	Catmint
Gaillardia	Poppies	Sage	Veronica
Rudbeckia	Astilbe	Bleeding Heart	Lupine
Clematis	Butterfly Weed	Globe Thistle	Joe Pye weed
Ajuga	Hardy Vinca	Pachysandra	Lamium
Shrubs and Trees			
Barberry	Boxwood	Magnolia	Smoke Tree
Daphne	Juniper	Mahonia	Rhododendron
Sumac	Hawthorn	Holly	Lilac
Buckthorn	Potentilla	Spirea	

Links: http://www.wildlifedamagecontrol.com/deerrepellentinfo.htm

http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/hortcult/treeshru/resistan.htm

http://web.simmons.edu/~franka/520/project/deterrents.html

http://www.northerngardening.com/deerplants.htm