

Impact of Deer on our Landscape



Deer Consumption of Homeowner Garden and Plant Materials

Deer Behavior

- Deer are highly adaptable in habitat and diet selection.
- Deer are creatures of habit. If left undisturbed, with plenty to eat, they will follow the same routine day in day out.
- Changes in weather or their food source would shift their pattern.
- If food is plentiful, deer will wander and sample until they find what tastes best.



Suburban Salad Bar



What ate my plant?

- Deer lack upper incisors, so they bite foliage and tear it free, creating jagged edges.
- This is also true when they bite a stem – the edge is jagged.
- Damage can be up to 6' from the ground.
- Rabbits leave neatly clipped stems and prefer new, tender growth, including stems, growing tips and leaves.
- Sometimes they'll munch an older leaf but may not eat the entire thing.
- Rabbit damage tends to be low to the ground.
- They also chisel away bark on woody plants, especially in fall and winter.



Plants Damaged by Deer

- Hasta
- Tulip
- Sedum
- Lilies
- Azaleas
- Rhododendrons
- Arborvitae
- To name a few....



Protecting your Landscape

- Plant Selection
 - Choose plant material that is less desired by deer.
- Repellents
 - Host of commercial and “home” repellents.
- Fencing
 - Best used for site specific problems.
- Using Dogs as a deterrent
 - Less than desirable as dogs would need to be outside 24/7.
- Hazing & Frightening Techniques
 - Not recommended in neighborhoods.

Plant Selection

- One of the most effective means by choosing plant materials that are less desired by deer.
- Plan gardens with less desired plants protecting desired plants.
- Many web-based resources identify deer resistant plant material.
 - <http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/info/pubs/Wildlife/reducing%20deer%20damage.pdf>
 - <http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/info/pubs/Wildlife/resistance%20of%20woody%20ornamentals%20plants%20to%20Deer%20Damage.pdf>
- If food is scarce, deer may eat less desired plant materials.

Repellents

- Odor-based Repellents
 - Repels with a disagreeable odor. Preferred repellent method as deer are deterred from sampling plant material.
 - May not work 100% of the time on highly desired plants.
 - Contain: Rotten Eggs; Tallow-based Soap, predator urine or blood meal.
 - Application can be labor intensive.
- Taste-based Repellents
 - Repels with disagreeable taste.
 - Less effective because deer must take a bite.
 - Contain: Capsaicin or Thiram (a fungicide).

Repellents

- Odor-based repellents are more effective than Taste-based.
- Must be reapplied every 4-5 weeks to maintain effectiveness.
- Very effective when combined with fencing.
- Many homemade repellents
 - Not evaluated or registered by the US EPA
 - Concoction with rotten eggs
 - Tallow-based soap (Ivory or Irish Spring)
 - Human hair

Fences

- Reliable deterrent for site specific areas. The visual barrier coupled with an odor-based repellent can be effective.
- Before you buy, consider:
 - Design
 - Landscape value
 - Site History
 - Local Ordinances
 - Deer Density
 - Size of area
- Barrier fencing is useful to protect individual highly desired trees and plants.
- Rope fencing at a height of 3-4' provides an excellent visual barrier.
- Snow fencing are useful during winter to protect plant material.
- Plastic netting, a more aesthetic alternative can protect individual plants or small areas and isn't visible from a distance.

Other deterrents

- Dogs
 - Many drawbacks including certain breeds would not be effective and dogs would need to be outside 24/7.
- Hazing & Frightening Techniques
 - Use of loud sounds and pyrotechnics. Best for rural settings.

BGC Gardeners Combat Deer

- Use of Deer Resistant Plant Materials
- Use of Fences
- Repellents
 - Commercial:
 - Deer Off; Liquid Fence; Milorganite on new spring growth.
 - Homemade:
 - 2 eggs, beaten; 2 tbsp Murphy's Oil Soap; 1 gallon of water. Mix together. Leave in sun to rot. Others use hot sauce in this recipe. Apply in dish soap dispenser or spray bottle to non-edible plants.
 - Use of Tallow-based Soap (Ivory or Irish Spring) Bars Tied to trees or grated and spread around perimeter of plants & gardens.

Protecting landscaping is one component of a larger deer management strategy.

Sources / Links

- **NYS DEC Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer in New York State 2012-2016**
http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/deerplan2012.pdf
- **Reducing Deer Damage to Home Gardens and Landscape Plantings**
<http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/info/pubs/Wildlife/reducing%20deer%20damage.pdf>
- **Wildlife Damage Management Fact Sheet Series White-Tailed Deer**
http://wildlifecontrol.info/pubs/Documents/Deer/Deer_factsheet.pdf
- **How Deer and Beaver Affect You and Your Land and What You Can Do About It**
http://www2.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/info/pubs/Wildlife/deer_beaver_sullivan-curtis.htm
- **Impacts of White-Tailed Deer Overabundance in Forest Ecosystems: An Overview**
http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/special_interests/white_tailed_deer.pdf
- **Cornell Gardening Resources – Deer Defenses**
<http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/factsheets/deerdef/>