

Deer Resistant Perennials, Ferns & Grasses

Deer proof plants are something of a relative term. No plants are safe from starving deer. The most deer resistant plants are those that are poisonous, have a milky sap, or gray, fuzzy leaves. While I do not recommend only planting poisonous plants, unless you are Morticia Adams, some of them have a place in the landscape. The plants listed below have been found to be generally resistant to deer attacks, or passed over for better tasting plants in you or your neighbor's yard. The age of the plant will also determine its likelihood to be browsed. Younger plants have more sugars and are far more susceptible. However, if hungry or under extreme population densities, deer will eat just about anything. Also, keep in mind that deer cannot read, and posting this list in your garden is of little use. Even though plants are toxic, young deer may still take a test bite out of your prized plants. I found this to be true when some aconitum were found chewed (which is very rare). Probably a young deer who did not know any better.

Rabbit proof plants are different and in another section. Generally, rabbits eat more varieties than deer. Rabbit damage can be distinguished by the smooth cutting of the stems, whereas deer leave stems ragged. In addition, woodchucks and other herbivores can also do severe damage.

In addition to planting deer resistant plants, protective sprays or fencing are also effective. I have found that all but the most elaborate fencing will direct the deer away from your yard, much to your neighbors chagrin. One particularly bad year I was forced to completely cover an island bed of phlox and asters (favorite deer chow) with bird netting, taking it off on weekends. Protective sprays are a much better alternative. Products like Tree Guard, Ropel and others give very good protection, if they are applied regularly, especially when the plants are in active growth. I have been able to enjoy tulips again using sprays. Other alternative methods that have seemed effective in detouring deer from making a meal out of the garden; spreading grated Ivory soap around plants, mix 1 slightly beaten egg with 1 quart water and spray around plants, potent potions consisting of black pepper, garlic and curry powder sprinkled around plants, human hair, blood meal or moth balls.

PERENNIALS & FERNS

Achillea	Eupatorium	Lavandula	Physostegia
Aconitum	Euphorbia	Liatris	Polystichum
Alchemilla	Galium	Lychnis	Salvia
Allium	Geranium	Matteuccia	Sedum sieboldii
Amsonia	Gypsophila	Monarda	Solidago
Anemone	Helenium	Nepeta	Stachys
Artemisia	Helleborus	Osmunda	Thymus
Asclepias	Houttuynia	Papaver	Tradescantia
Aster azureus	Iris sibirica	Phlox divaricata	Veronicastrum
Astilbe	Lamiaeum	Phlox stolonifera	Vinca
Athyrium	Lamium	Phlox subulata	Yucca

GRASSES

Andropogon	Helictotrichon	Pennisetum
Calamagrostis	Imperata	Schizachyrium
Carex	Miscanthus	Sorghastrum
Chasmanthium (Uniola)	Panicum	Sporobolus

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