

Deer Resistant Plants

Gray Barn Green Thumb Guide



Deer inhabit almost every part of the American continent. They are adaptable and may change their feeding preferences over time. During times of hunger, deer will eat almost any plant to survive. Following is a list of plants that are usually deer resistant.

Annuals

Alyssum	Alyssum
Calendula	Calendula officinalis
Dusty Miller	Senecio cineraria
Floss Flower	Ageratum houstonianum
Lemon grass	Cymbopogon citratus
Licorice Plant	Helichrysum petiolare
Marigold	Tagetes tenuifolia
Pincushion Flower	Scabiosa atropurpurea
Snapdragon	Antirrhinum majus
Verbena	verbena x hybrid
Zinnia	Zinnia

Perennials

Allium	Allium spp.
Astilbe	Astilbe spp.
Bachelor's Button	Centaurea cineraria
Basil	Ocimum basilicum
Barrenwort	Epimedium grandiflorum
Bellflower	Campanula spp.
Bergenia	Bergenia spp.
Black-eyed Susan	Rudbeckia hirta
Bleeding Heart	Dicentra spectabilis
Black Snakeroot	Actaea racemosa
Blue False Indigo	Baptisia australis
Calla lily	Zantedeschia spp.
Catmint	Nepeta spp.
Columbine	Aquilegia spp.
Cushion spurge	Euphorbia polychrome
Daffodil	Narcissus spp.
Delphinium	Delphinium spp.
Forget-me-not	Myosotis scorpioides
Foxglove	Digitalis spp.
Geranium	Geranium spp.
Iris	Iris spp.
Japanese Spurge	Pachysandra terminalis

Lady's mantle
Lamb's Ear
Lavender
Lily of the Nile
Lenten rose
Lupine
Mint
Monkshood
New Zealand flax
Oregano
Oxalis
Peony
Poppy
Rose campion
Rosemary
Russian sage
Sage
Saint John's wort
Siberian bugloss
Snowdrop
Summer snowflake
Thyme
Yarrow

Alchemilla mollis
Stachys byzantina
Lavandula angustifolia
Agapanthus
Helleborus orientalis
Lupinus Spp.
Mentha spp.
Aconitum carmichaelii
Phormium tenax
Origanum vulgare
Oxalis spp.
Paeonia spp.
Papaver spp.
Lychnis coronaria
Rosmarinus officinalis
Perovskia atriplicifolia
Salvia officinalis
Hypericum spp.
Brunnera macrophylla
Galanthus nivalis
Leucojum aestivum
Thymus vulgaris
Achillea millefolium

Shrubs

Abelia
Barberry
Beautyberry
Bluebeard
Boxwood
Bush cinquefoil
Butterfly bush
California lilac
Cotoneaster
Currant
Daphne
Abelia grandiflora
Berberis spp.
Caulicarpa spp.
Caryopteris x clandonensis
Buxus spp.
Potentilla fruticosa
Buddleia spp.
Ceanothus spp.
Cotoneaster spp.
Ribes spp.
Daphne spp.

Enkianthus	Enkianthus campanulatus
Euonymus	Euonymus spp.
Forsythia	Forsythia spp.
Heather	Calluna vulgaris
Heath	Erica carnea
Heavenly bamboo	Nandina domestica
Holly	Ilex spp.
Japanese Kerria	Kerria japonica
Juniper	Juniperus spp.
Lilac	Syringa spp.
Mexican orange	Choisya ternate
Mock orange	Philadelphus spp.
Mountain laurel	Kalmia latifolia
Oregon grape	Mahonia spp.
Pacific wax myrtle	Myrica californica
Pieris	Pieris japonica
Rhododendron	Rhododendron spp.
Rock rose	Cistus spp.
Salal	Gaultheria shallon
Smoke bush	Cotinus coggygia
Spiraea	Spiraea japonica
Russian cypress	Microbiota decussate
Viburnum	Viburnum spp.
Weigela	Weigela florida
Wisteria	Wisteria spp.
Yucca	Yucca spp.

Ferns and Grasses

Dryopteris erythrosora	Autumn fern
Sword fern	Polystichum munitum
Cinnamon fern	Osmunda cinnamomea
Japanese painted fern	Athyrium niponicum
Ostrich fern	Matteuccia struthiopteris
Bamboo	Several genera
Fescue	Festuca spp.
Fountain grass	Pennisetum alopecuroides
Japanese forest grass	Hakonechloa macra
Japanese silver grass	Miscanthus sinensis
Japanese sweet flag	Acorus gramineus
Sedge	Carex morrowii
Switch grass	Panicum virgatum

Identify the culprit.

This can be done by finding tracks, scat or watching the animals themselves. After deer feed they leave a torn, jagged edge on plants. This can occur from ground level up to 6 or 7 feet.



If you find a neatly clipped stem or leaf, it's not from a deer.

Plants deer love to eat. Besides the list of deer resistant plants, it's good to know which ones they consider a special treat: Azalea, Arborvitae, Apple, Blueberry, Burning Bush, Cherry, Clematis, Coleus, Cosmos, Daylily, English Ivy, Hydrangea, Impatiens, Lily, Magnolia, Mountain Ash, Rose, Maple, Peach, Plum, Rhododendron, Chrysanthemum, Geum, Hosta, Tulip, Trillium, Phlox, Pansy, Petunia, Sweet Potato Vine, Yew, Zonal Geranium and garden vegetables.

Deer repellent plants. Deer will avoid plants that are highly fragrant, have poisonous compounds, have fuzzy or aromatic leaves and tough, spiny or bristly textures. Here are a few: Catmint, Chives, Foxglove, Sage, Society Garlic, Spearmint, Thyme, Yarrow.

Strategies to deter deer: Substitute undesirable plants for deer-preferred (for example rugosa roses instead of hybrid tea roses), make the entryway to the garden unattractive to deer (use plants with strong scents), mix confusing combinations (daylilies and garlic), camouflage or block the view of susceptible plants, eliminate unnecessary cover (tall grass and brush), clean up fallen fruit and utilize xeriscaping. Some deterrents include soap, hair, rotten eggs, fabric softener sheets, blood meal, predator urine, hot pepper sprays, moving objects, white flags, timed lighting or sprinklers, noises, fencing (at least 8 feet) and dogs. Deer are adaptable and will learn. For the most success, change, rotate or overlap different strategies to prevent acclimatization.

Rotten Egg Recipe: 2 eggs, 2 cups water, 1-4 cloves garlic, (optional 2 Tbsp. Tabasco sauce). Blend and ferment for two days. Apply on soil and plants to discourage deer.

Resources: Deer Proofing Your Yard and Garden by Rhonda Messingham Hart, 1997
50 Beautiful Deer Resistant Plants by Ruth Rogers Clausen, 2011
Creating a Deer Proof Garden by Peter Derano, 2007