

Pest Busters #4 - Deer

Deer can be a huge problem for a lot of people. Once they have found your garden it is hard to get rid of them. They know that there is a tasty treat waiting for them and it will take a lot of persuading to get them to leave your garden alone.

The best way to deter deer, and the only 100% effective way that I know of, is to fence the area that you don't want the deer to get into. The fence doesn't need to be fancy, but it needs to be tall, about 8 feet tall to be exact. If an 8' fence is out of the question, many people have had success with a 4' tall fence that was slanted outward at a 45 degree angle. The angle of the fence can throw off their depth perception and they are reluctant to jump it. I have not tried that technique, so can't tell you if it does indeed work.

If fencing is out of the question, the following techniques may help.

1. During winter especially, surround vulnerable plants with chicken wire.
2. Keep dogs and or cats in your yard.
3. Spread a predatory urine in and around the area. You can purchase it in a powdered form as well as a liquid form. Coyote is preferred, but I've heard desperate gardeners have used human urine with limited success.
4. Hang pieces of Irish Spring soap around the garden. The deer are not supposed to like the smell.
5. A homemade concoction made from rotten eggs can be sprayed on plants they like to eat. In a blender, mix 3 raw eggs, 3 tablespoons of hot pepper sauce, 3 tablespoons of garlic juice or minced garlic and 3 tablespoons of water to make a paste. Add this paste to a gallon of warm water and spray all over the area being affected by the deer. You will need to reapply after a rain or about once every 3-4 days.
6. Spread human hair around the garden. It gives them the illusion that there are people still in the area.
7. Spread blood meal around the garden. It's a good fertilizer too.
8. Hang ammonia soaked rags in the trees and bushes.
9. Many people swear by the product called Miloganite, which is also an organic fertilizer.
10. Use scare tactics, such as sprinklers that come on when it senses movement in the area.
11. Divert their attention elsewhere. I've read people putting out salt licks away from the original deer path has helped to deter the deer from their usual walking route.

To make some of the homemade concoctions last longer, you can put the hair or soap inside a stocking and then hang in up, or soak cotton rags or cotton balls in the various liquids mentioned and put those inside stockings.

There are also many products at your local nursery that claim to repel deer and other critters. You can try them if none of these methods work for you. Just remember, that deer are smart, and once they realize they won't be hurt by your tactics, they may return, so it's important to change things up every now and then to keep them guessing, or use more than one method at a time.

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You can also put in plants that deer don't like. Just keep in mind that if they are hungry enough, deer will eat nearly anything. Here is a list to get you started.

- Agastache
- Ajuga
- Allium
- Artemisia
- Baptisia
- Barberry
- Bishop's Weed
- Bleeding Heart
- Blue Fescue
- Buttercup
- Butterfly Bush
- Calendula
- Carex
- Christmas Fern
- Cinnamon Fern
- Cleome
- Coreopsis
- Cypress
- Daffodils
- Datura
- Elderberry
- Forget-Me-Not
- Fountain Grass
- Foxglove
- Frittilaria
- Helleborous
- Holly Fern
- Iris
- Japanese Black Pine
- Japanese Blood Grass
- Japanese Painted Fern
- Juniper
- Lamium
- Larkspur
- Lavender
- Ligularia
- Lily of the Valley
- Mint
- Nicotiana
- Ostrich Fern
- Pachysandra
- Peony
- Pitch Pine
- Poppy
- Potentilla
- Pulmonaria
- Red Pine
- River Birch
- Russian Sage
- Salvia
- Scilla
- Snapdragons
- Snowdrops
- Sweet Alyssum
- Thyme
- Vinca
- Winter Aconite
- Wood Fern
- Yucca