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Native Plants and Deer

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TIPS FOR A DEER-SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE

- * In general, deer avoid:
 - strongly-scented plants, such as mints,
 - toxic plants or plants with latex sap, such as milkweeds, or
 - plants with fuzzy leaves, such as flowering raspberry.
- * Nurture diversity. Unappetizing plants can safeguard tastier ones.
- * Having lots of plants rather than lawn-dominated landscapes reduces the impact on any one plant.
- * Thorny shrubs or brambles help protect trees and other plants from deer-browsing.
- * Site plants that can thrive on deer's natural pruning on path edges.
- * Sprinkle human urine around the perimeter of new plantings or planting beds.

Exclusion techniques

- * Protect young trees with tall cages.
- * Fences can work but they must be 8-ft high to exclude deer.
- * Lower fences can be extended with deer netting or combined with a row of dense shrubs.
- * Don't leave too big of a gap at the bottom of the fence. Deer, especially fawns, can wriggle under.
- * Some other styles of lower-cost fencing options have been used, such as slanting fences, single or double-wire fences, or double fences.

A different perspective: Nancy Lawson [Gardening for Deer](http://humanegardener.com/gardening-for-deer/) at humanegardener.com/gardening-for-deer/

THE PLANT LISTS

This list has been compiled from several lists that reflected the experiences of those who compiled each list, so some plants may appear in more than one category.

As Nancy Lawson, *The Humane Gardener* notes: "... every environment is different, and what mammals eat depends on context: time of year, what else is growing in your garden and in the local community, abundance and placement of plants, etc."

Plants are listed in the following groups:

- * Plants RARELY bothered by deer
- * Plants SOMETIMES bothered by deer
- * Plants TASTY to deer, but RESILIENT
- * Plants OFTEN bothered by deer



RARELY BOTHERED BY DEER

BUT ... there are no deer-proof plants!

"In the context of expansive lawns, what looks like abundance to a gardener seems like half-empty grocery shelves to animals, and they'll take what they can find to support their dietary needs."

~ Nancy Lawson, *Gardening for Deer* at humanegardener.com/gardening-for-deer/

HERBACEOUS rarely bothered by deer

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
Northern monkshood (*Aconitum noveboracense*)
White baneberry (*Actaea pachypoda*)
Black cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*)
Red baneberry (*Actaea rubra*)
Hyssop (*Agastache* spp.)
White snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*)
Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*)
White leek (*Allium tricoccum*)
Canada anemone (*Anemone canadensis*)
Pussytoes (*Antennaria* spp.)
Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)
American spikenard (*Aralia racemosa*)
Green dragon (*Arisaema dracontium*)
Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)

Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*)
Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Milk-vetch (*Astragalus canadensis*)
Yellow wild indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*)
False nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*)
Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)
Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*)
Toothwort (*Cardamine* spp.)
Blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)
White turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
Spotted wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*)
Pipsissewa (*Chimaphila umbellata*)
Wild basil (*Clinopodium vulgare*)
Blue mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*)
Pink tickseed (*Coreopsis rosea*)
Blue waxweed (*Cuphea viscosissima*)
Dutchmen's britches (*Dicentra cucullaria*)
Squirrel corn (*Dicentra canadensis*)
Wild bleeding heart (*Dicentra eximia*)
Shooting stars (*Dodecatheon meadia*)
Robin's plantain (*Erigeron pulchellus*)
Common boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)
Late boneset (*Eupatorium serotinum*)
Flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*)
White wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*)
Joe-pye (*Eutrochium purpureum*)
Bottle gentian (*Gentiana clausa*)
Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)
White avens (*Geum canadense*)
Water avens (*Geum rivale*)
Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*)
Round-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica americana*)
Woodland sunflower (*Helianthus* e)
Canada waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum canadense*)
Virginia waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*)
Flax-leaved stiff-aster (*Ionactis linariifolia*)
Dwarf crested iris (*Iris cristata*)
Northern blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*)
Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*)
Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*)
Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*)
Sundial lupine (*Lupinus perennis*)
Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*)
False Solomon's seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*)

Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)
 Monkey flower (*Mimulus ringens*)
 Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*)
 Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)
 Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)
 Common evening-primrose (*Oenothera biennis*)
 Narrow-leaved sundrops (*Oenothera fruticosa*)
 Narrow-leaved goldenrod (*Oligoneuron rigida*)
 Prickly pear (*Opuntia humifusa*)
 Allegheny pachysandra (*Pachysandra procumbens*)
 Golden ragwort (*Packera aurea*)
 Woodland phlox (*Phlox divaricata*)
 Moss phlox (*Phlox subulata*)
 Obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*)
 Canada clearweed (*Pilea pumila*)
 Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*)
 Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium reptans*)
 Mountain mints (*Pycnanthemum* spp.)
 Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* spp.)
 Lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*)
 Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*)
 Lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*)
 Showy skullcap (*Scutellaria serrata*)
 Wild stonecrop (*Sedum ternatum*)
 Golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*)
 Maryland senna (*Senna marilandica*)
 Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*)
 False Solomon's-seal (*Smilacina racemosa*)
 Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.)
 Celandine poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*)
 Heartleaf aster (*Symphyotrichum cordifolium*)
 Smooth aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*)
 New Eng. aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)
 New York aster (*Symphyotrichum novi-belgii*)
 Aromatic aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*)
 Frost aster (*Symphyotrichum pilosum*)
 Skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)
 Early meadow-rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*)
 Rue-anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*)
 Heartleaf foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*)
 Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)
 Culver's root (*Veronicastrum virginicum*)
 Labrador violet (*Viola labridorica*)
 Smooth white violet (*Viola pallens*)
 Downy yellow violet (*Viola pubescens*)
 Barren strawberry (*Waldsteinia fragarioides*)
 Heart-leaf golden alexanders (*Zizia aptera*)

GRASSES rarely bothered by deer

Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*)
 Appalachian sedge (*Carex appalachica*)
 Fernald's sedge (*Carex merritt-fernaldii*)
 Seersucker sedge (*Carex plantaginea*)
 Tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*)
 Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)
 Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

FERNS rarely bothered by deer

Maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*)
 Hart's tongue (*Asplenium scolopendrium*)
 Lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*)
 Hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*)
 Wood ferns (*Dryopteris* spp.)
 Ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*)
 Sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*)
 Cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*)
 Interrupted fern (*Osmunda claytoniana*)
 Royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*)
 Rock polypody (*Polypodium virginianum*)
 Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*)
 Braun's holly fern (*Polystichum braunii*)
 New York fern (*Thelypteris noveboracensis*)
 Rusty Woodsia fern (*Woodsia ilvensis*)
 Netted chain fern (*Woodwardia areolata*)

VINES rarely bothered by deer

American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*)
 Virgin's bower (*Clematis virginiana*)
 Northeastern hops (*Humulus lupulus*)
 Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)
 Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
 Grapes (*Vitis* spp.)

SHRUBS rarely bothered by deer

Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)
 New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus*)
 Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
 Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*)
 Red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)
 Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)
 Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
 Shrubby St. John's wort (*Hypericum prolificum*)
 Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)
 Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
 Northern sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*)
 Sweetgale (*Myrica gale*)
 Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)
 Shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*)
 Pinxter flower (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*)
 Fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)
 Pussy willow (*Salix discolor*)
 3-Toothed-cinquefoil (*Sibbaldiopsis tridentata*)
 Meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*)
 Steeplebush (*Spiraea tomentosa*)
 Bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*)
 Blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.)
 Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*)

TREES rarely bothered by deer

Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*)
 Maples (*Acer* spp.)
 Serviceberries (*Amelanchier* spp.)
 Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)
 Birch (*Betula* spp.)
 Paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*)
 Shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*)
 Pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*)
 Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
 Hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.)
 Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)
 Ash (*Fraxinus* spp.)
 American holly (*Ilex opaca*)
 Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)
 Larch (*Larix laricina*)
 Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)
 Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
 Cucumber tree (*Magnolia acuminata*)
 Northern sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*)
 Hop hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*)
 White spruce (*Picea glauca*)
 Red pine (*Pinus resinosa*)
 Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*)
 Eastern sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
 Cherry (*Prunus* spp.)
 Oak (*Quercus* spp.)
 Sumac (*Rhus* spp.)
 Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)



SOMETIMES BOTHERED BY DEER

HERBACEOUS sometimes bothered by deer

Canada anemone (*Anemone canadensis*)
Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)
Cutleaf toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*)
Two-leaved toothwort (*Cardamine diphylla*)
White turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
Green and gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*)
Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
Joe-pye (*Eutrochium purpureum*)
Wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)
American alumroot (*Heuchera americana*)
Oxeye sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*)
Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*)
Twin flower (*Linnaea borealis*)
American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*)
Green coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*)
Yellow wood poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*)
Globeflower (*Trollius laxus*)

GRASSES sometimes bothered by deer

Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)
Bottlebrush grass (*Elymus hystrix*)

VINES sometimes bothered by deer

Virginia-creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

SHRUBS sometimes bothered by deer

Gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)
Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)
Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
Smooth hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*)
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
Mountain winterberry (*Ilex montana*)
Shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*)
Rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*)
Flowering raspberry (*Rubus odoratus*)
Hobble bush (*Viburnum lantanoides*)

TREES sometimes bothered by deer

Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)
Silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*)
Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*)
Black maple (*Acer nigrum*)
Downy serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*)

Smooth serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*)
Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)
Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*)
White oak (*Quercus alba*)
Mountain chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*)
Red oak (*Quercus rubra*)
American linden (*Tilia americana*)
Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)



TASTY BUT RESILIENT

These plants are often nibbled by deer or other mammals, but they're hardy and well-adapted to herbivory as well as being useful for birds and pollinators.

HERBACEOUS – Tasty but resilient

Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
Partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)
Enchanter's nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*)
Daisy fleabane (*Erigeron annuus*)
Philadelphia fleabane (*Erigeron philadelphicus*)
Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
Swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*)
Spotted jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*)
Evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*)
Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*)
Brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*)
Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.)
Common blue violet (*Viola sororia*)
Golden alexander (*Zizia aurea*)

GRASSES: Tasty but resilient

Eastern woodland sedge (*Carex blanda*)
Nimblewill (*Muhlenbergia schreberi*)
Purpletop grass (*Tridens flavus*)

VINES: Tasty but resilient

Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
Grapes (*Vitis* spp.)

SHRUBS: Tasty but resilient

Silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
Northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)

Virginia rose (*Rosa virginiana*)
Black raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*)
Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*)

TREES: Tasty but resilient

Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*)
Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)



USUALLY BOTHERED BY DEER

HERBACEOUS usually bothered by deer

Trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*)
Canada lily (*Lilium canadense*)
Turk's-cap lily (*Lilium superbum*)
Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*)
False Solomon's seal (*Smilacina racemosa*)
Large-flowered bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*)
Sessile bellwort (*Uvularia sessilifolia*)
Trillium (*Trillium* spp.)

SHRUBS usually bothered by deer

American plum (*Prunus americana*)
Pinxter flower (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*)
Canada yew (*Taxus canadensis*)

TREES usually bothered by deer

Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*)
Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*)
Wild black cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
Canada plum (*Prunus nigra*)
American arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*)



Learn more at Our Habitat Garden:

More resources on deer including fencing options:
ourhabitatgarden.org/home/creatures/invasers/native/deer/

Sources used in compiling this resource:

Amanda's Native Plants
Finger Lakes Native Plant Society
Humane Gardener: [Gardening among hungry mammals](#)
Native Plant Trust
The Plantsmen Nursery

Factsheet compiled by Janet Allen June 2024