

Deer_2004.txt

Subject: deer

ADVERTISEMENT

Now there's a question that almost everyone can identify with! :)

Unfortunately, if deer are hungry, they're going to eat whatever they can find to eat and a lot of what we plant is as appealing to them as it is to us. Sometimes it seems like we plant for the critters and then take home the leftovers for ourselves. I'm willing to share and I know that's part of the whole gardening experience, but I'd like to take home more than the critters do. :)

The good news is that there are lots of things you can try in the effort to discourage the deer from coming into your garden. It's definitely a challenge, but there are many people on this list who have had success with different things and I'm sure they will be glad to share them.

My own experience with deer (and other critters) has been a challenging one as well because I garden in a community garden in a county park. The garden area is about the size of a football field and there is no fencing around the garden or the park itself. So I definitely understand your frustration.

You say that you garden on lots of land. Is the actual garden area too big to fence? Keeping in mind that even if you do put up a fence, it would need to be over six feet tall to keep out the deer.

My mom, whose property extends out into the woods, so she has deer challenges as well, hangs bars of soap around the garden. They don't

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wash away in the rain as quickly as soap shavings will. She thinks that has been helpful.

Some other things people have used....

--human hair or pet hair (if you have a hair salon or pet grooming place near you, they would probably be glad to give you what they sweep up)

--this might sound crude, but...sometimes desperate times call for desperate measures, lol. Some people use urine. Sounds gross, but...can be effective. Not ON the plants, of course, but around the perimeter. Of course this would have to be...ahem...reapplied regularly because it would also wash away in the rain and the scent would just fade.

--this one sounds silly, perhaps, but old shoes left in the garden can have enough of a human scent to give deer enough caution to stay away.

--sweat rags, lol. When I work in the garden I have a cloth that I use for wiping the sweat off my forehead and neck in the heat of summer and when I leave, I tie it to a stake.

--shiny things. If you can string some old CD's, aluminum pie pans, tin foil strips, etc... around the garden, sometimes as they move in the wind the movement is enough to scare the deer.

--noise. If you have a little portable radio that you can leave on in the garden when you leave, that could help. It will use a lot of batteries over time (unless you have rechargeable), but it might help.

--netting. I've found this to be most effective in my community garden situation. It can be a bit of a nuisance, but not that

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much. You can get the netting at most hardware stores or places like Home Depot.

--plants they don't like. I discovered last summer that the deer don't like chamomile (they didn't come near that part of the garden) and they don't seem to like Cosmos. It's because of the feathery foliage, I think. So next year I'm going to plant those all around the border, just to see if it will help. It can't hurt and it's pretty and chamomile is wonderful, so I could never have too much of it. :) There are other plants that the deer don't care for so much, so it's helpful to plant those at the border. Not a sure fire cure, but every effort helps.

--a sacrificial garden. I have no idea if this would actually be helpful or not, but had thought about trying it. By 'sacrificial', I mean a garden that you can plant just for the deer. You won't have to tend to it much - just get the plants started and possibly, if you're taking other measures for YOUR garden and this sacrificial garden is easily accessed by the deer - who knows - maybe they will just go there instead. Again - haven't tried it, don't know anybody who has, but thought I'd throw the idea out there.

A border of carpet or chicken wire around the outer edge of the garden. The deer don't like to walk on it. It has to be a couple of feet wide, I think. I know someone out here (Cynthia, maybe?) wrote about this lastyear. She can tell you more of the details of how to use that.

I'm sure others will have other ideas for you also. Good luck!

rachel
PA, suburban homesteader, community gardener