

BV/S neighbor and Travis County Master Gardener Reeve Hobbie is glad to be able to offer pertinent gardening subjects in articles throughout the year.

Dear Deer,

I love you, but I really don't want you around me! (at least not in my garden)

by Reeve Hobbie



Since many of us share our yards with a growing population of white-tailed deer, we have to make some adjustments to our landscaping if we want to keep it. Lots of hungry deer will eat almost anything when they are desperate for food and moisture!

I've got three things to share regarding the growing invasion of the white tails. Let me start out with the city ordinance that prohibits feeding them, then talk about what you can do about your current landscaping, and finally provide you with a list of deer-resistant plants for a renewed landscape.

The Law

The City of Austin adopted an ordinance in 2009 prohibiting intentional feeding of deer.

The ordinance amends the City Code to add Chapter 10-8 which:

- Prohibits intentional feeding of or making food available to deer within City limits
- Creates a Class C Misdemeanor for violations
- Establishes a fine not less than \$75 or more than \$125

In 2013, enforcement of the Intentional Feeding of Deer Ordinance transferred to the Austin Code Department. Violations of the ordinance can be reported to the Code Compliance Department by calling 311 or using the Citizen Web Intake Portal.

The Landscape

If parts of your existing landscape are being munched on or even torn up by deer, you can try any number of commercial or home remedies. Installing a barrier of some sort is one approach. You can try individually netting plants, caging them, creating a fish line fence, or even putting up a more substantial fence (of course with BV/S HOA approval). Other deterrents can be in the form of scare tactics such as motion-activated noise makers, lights or sprinklers. These may only be effective for a short while before the deer find a way around your tactics.

I prefer deer repellents that work best to stop deer from nibbling on your landscape delicacies. Homemade remedies include spreading concoctions of cayenne pepper, garlic or even Irish Spring soap. There are a number of good deer repellents available at local nurseries and DIY stores. Most all repellents, whether homemade or purchased, are effective until we receive a rainfall or the irrigation system runs and they get washed away. Frequent re-application becomes necessary.

The best solution is to plan on replacing your plantings that the deer favor. Nothing is truly deer-proof, especially during times of drought and growing herd size, but there are plants that are not as enticing to deer. Generally, deer tend to avoid plants with aromatic foliage, tough leathery and/or hairy or prickly leaves, plants with milky latex or sap and plants they seem to know to be toxic. However, from personal experience, new young plantings of so-called deer-resistant plants may be yanked out from their beds as soon as you put them in. In other words, deer-resistance applies to established plants, so you may need to protect anything new you plant in your garden.

The List

Here are some deer-resistant (can't be guaranteed deer-proof) plants to consider for your landscape. This list does not tell you individual plant needs or characteristics – water needs, amount of sun, how big they'll get, wildlife attraction (birds, hummingbird, bees, butterflies), evergreen or deciduous, flowers/berries or not, color, seasonal interest – it is simply a partial list* of deer-resistant plants for the Austin area. Other lists are available at any number of sites online. Do some comparisons. You will be amazed at both the similarities and differences.

Annuals

Bluebonnet
Blue Curl
Larkspur
Marigold
Mexican Hat
Milkweed
Periwinkle
Zinnia

Perennials

Artemesia
Beebalm
Black-eyed Susan
Blackfoot Daisy
Cenizo
Copper Canyon Daisy
Damianita
Herbs (most all)
Lamb's Ear
Lantana
Mexican Mint Marigold
Mexican Oregano
Sage (all)
Salvia (all)
Texas Betony
Yarrow

Groundcovers

Golden Groundsel
Santolina

Grasses

Bamboo Muhly
Big Muhly
Deer Muhly
Gulf Muhly
Indiangrass
Inland Sea Oat
Little Bluestem
Pine Muhly
Switchgrass

Shrubs

Agarita
Flame Acanthus
Flowering Senna
Fragrant Sumac
Mock Orange
Texas Barberry
Thryallis
Upright Rosemary

Small Trees/Large Shrubs

Anacacho Orchid Tree
Mexican Buckeye
Texas Mountain Laurel
Windmill Palm

Trees

Sycamore
Most any (may require caging in early years to protect bark)

To summarize, don't feed our deer, protect your current landscape, and consider planting deer-resistant plants in the cool of this fall and winter.

* Selections from the free *Native and Adapted Landscape Plants for Central Texas*, a very useful guide available at most nurseries. Personal selections too.

If you have questions about your yard or garden, please call Travis County Master Gardeners at 512-854-9600. The person at the other end of the line may not have an immediate answer, but they'll research it for you and will get back with you.