

How to manage deer and rabbits In your garden



Rabbits have enjoyed the tender leaves on this Hosta

Cute rabbits and elegant deer can quickly lose their popularity ranking in your ratings book when they start feasting away on the greens in your yard.

Unfortunately, there is no single solution, but there are many options to try and still maintain your good karma with mother nature's animals.

Fences: The most effective and humane way of deterring these animals is fencing. Create a barrier between your beds and the critters by putting up a wire fence 1 to 3 feet high, commonly made of chicken wire. For deer, the fence will need to be 8 to 10 feet high for deer. Make sure to bury the bottom edge of the fence at least 6 inches under the ground to keep the most determined rabbits from burrowing beneath it. Openings should be no more than roughly 1 inch wide.

If you do not want to fence an entire flowerbed, fence individual plants by creating a cylinder of wire mesh around them. Commercial or homemade tree guards can also be used as an alternative to fencing.



An example of a browse line caused by deer

Limiting habitat: Try to remove any areas where rabbits may nest around your home/garden. Seal off any openings beneath decks, steps and buildings. Clear plant debris (fallen branches, brush, etc.) and remove low-growing branches and dense vegetation.

Repellants: There are natural repellants that are not only safe to use around animals and children, but are also environmentally friendly and still effective. Natural repellants are great for short-term relief but it will need to be re-applied frequently for best effect, especially after rainfall.

Rabbits have a keen sense of smell, so many repellents incorporate coyote urine or dried blood. These products can be purchased at your local nurseries and garden centers.

Some gardeners make their own spray using two tablespoons of hot pepper sauce mixed in a gallon of water with a couple squirts of dish soap. Speaking of soap, Peter Rabbit does not like the smell of Irish Spring soap. Grate or cut it into one inch cubes and disperse about the base of your plants to slow the moving feast.

Plants they don't like: You can discourage rabbits from eating your more desirable plants and edibles by growing varieties that they

typically avoid. Some include: tomatoes, lavender, boxwood, aster, vinca, amaryllis, lilac, rhododendron and more.

A “**decoy**” garden can be created to help lure bunnies away from your favored plants. Fill the decoy garden with selections that rabbits love so they feast on the decoys rather than on your actual garden

[See this link for lists of both desirable and non-desirable plants for rabbits.](#)

[Use this link for more information about deer.](#)