

Keeping Deer Out of Yards and Gardens

Spotting deer on your property could be a pastoral and welcome site . . . until they eat what you are growing for yourself! Then, these once precious animals become a nuisance. Landowners plant vegetables, bushes, fruit trees, and hardwood trees. Then, deer see this as easy fodder and welcome food.

White-tailed and some mule deer are found in essentially every county in Oklahoma. Deer population is growing very quickly, and so is the number of people moving onto acreage around the country. Many large yards back up to the dense bushy and untamed property deer claim as their own.

While shooting immediately comes to mind, there are other options of keeping deer off your property, even in deer season. You can call the Department of Agriculture or the local game warden. Consider taking these steps before vegetation is damaged or destroyed.

It might be good to first understand deer and their habits. Deer are busiest at dawn and dusk. They will be selective of their food unless it is winter when forage is scarce. Then, they will eat whatever they can get. They are browsers, not grazers, so they tend to nibble on tree limbs and tender shoots. They tend to strip off material versus biting it.

Deer have excellent smell, good night time vision, and good hearing. They can jump in excess of six vertical feet which is why many barriers do not deter them. They are very cautious, but have lousy depth perception. So, knowing this may come in handy when building a fence.

The most successful defense to keep deer out of vegetable gardens is to surround it with fencing. To be effective, the fence should be eight feet tall with no gaps. Electric fences provide an improved defense. Research shows that wrapping aluminum foil smeared with peanut butter along the electric fence will deter them even more. This type of fence will cost about 50 cents per foot using hog wire. If you have the ability, an alternative would be to build shorter fencing three deep and staggering the height and distance (remember, deer don't have

good depth perception). Also, small trees and new bushes can be wrapped in wire to prevent browsing.

Another mechanical way of keeping deer out of gardens is to use motion-sensing water sprayers. One squirt in the garden will send deer running. Flood lights may also work as well as it tends to blind their vision. They don't like that.

Next, try biological means to deter deer on your property. Pick up all fallen fruit and vegetables for they are easy pickings. Have dogs in the yard that will bark when they hear or see deer. Plant ground vegetation that deer will avoid.

Larger areas, like field crops, might be better treated chemically. Remember, deer have a great sense of smell. Research has indicated that two chemical sprays work well in deterring deer: Hinder and Bobbex. Bobbex is long-term with natural ingredients like rotten eggs, so don't spray on windy days. The temperature needs to be above 40 degrees and plants need to be dry. Chemical effectiveness wears off over time (in rain, etc.), so the areas may need to be resprayed.

Keep in mind that no chemical is 100% effective. Knowing this fact, consider combining and rotating various mechanical, biological, and chemical methods. This approach will likely improve your chance of success in keeping deer out of your garden.

[OSU Fact Sheet References:](#)

[HLA-6427](#)

Ornamental and Garden Plants: Controlling Deer Damage

[E-979](#)

White-Tailed Deer Habitat Evaluation & Management Guide

[L-267](#)

Wildlife Management Notes: White-Tailed Deer

[NREM-9020](#)

Quality Deer Management in Oklahoma

For further information contact Tulsa Master Gardener office at 918-746-3701, or visit them in person at 4116 E 15th Street, Tulsa, OK 74112.