

Deer in Bent Oaks

The neighborhood white tail deer population has grown over the last several years as their habitat condensed with surrounding development. Bent Oaks has abundant acorns, which is their favorite food. Properties with wooded backyards adjacent to Little Shoal Creek tributary are ideal for them and our irrigated gardens provide succulent grazing in spring, summer and fall. As deer do not have upper incisors, jagged cuts on plant stems and leaves are evidenced. In winter, food is scarcer and grazing on young twigs and conifers is evidenced by thin foliage below 5'. In fall, young bucks rub their itchy antlers on young trees 1 to 4" caliper to mark their territory and shredded bark 2-3' off the ground is visible. As they often return to their favorite tree, the tree can be girdled and be weakened or die.

The best strategies in suburban lots are to avoid planting deer's favorite plants, surround plantings with plants with strong scents that they dislike and use deterrents often and interchangeably.

Avoid planting these favorite deer plants:

Crocus	Impatiens	Yews
Tulips	Dahlias	Arborvitae
Hostas	Roses	Mugo pine
Lilies	Hydrangeas	White Pine
Sedums	Azaleas	Dogwood
Daylilies	Rhododendrons	

These strongly scented plants can, to some degree, deter deer if grown amongst other plants:

Catmint	Lavender	Thyme
Chives	Mint(invasive)	
Garlic	Sage	

Taste or smell deer deterrents are can be helpful. Deer can become accustomed to them so they should be changed periodically and they need to be reapplied after each rain. Used consistently they can minimize damage. Some deterrents reported to be most effective are 6.2 % hot sauce, Liquid Fence, Plantskydd, Deer-Away, coyote urine and bobcat urine.

Locally sources of help are:

MU Extension Master Gardener Hotline 833-TREE

Liberty Missouri Department of Conservation office 792-8662

More comprehensive lists of plants often, occasionally and rarely damaged by deer can be found in the following websites and books as well as additional information about deer problems.

<http://extension.missouri.edu/xplor/miscpubs/mp0685.htm>

<http://mdc.mo.gov/landown/wild/deermgmt/deer/>

<http://www.wvu.edu/~Agexten/hortcult/treeshru/resistan.htm>

Deerproofing Your Yard by Rhonda Hart, 2005