

Deer? Oh, Dear ... Try Herbs

BY KATHLEEN HALLORAN
ILLUSTRATION BY GAYLE FORD

In many parts of the United States, deer feast on every garden they can find, chomping and stomping their way through whole neighborhoods with little regard for aesthetics and no sense of fair play. Some frustrated gardeners give up, concluding their carefully tended beds are merely a smorgasbord for the local animal life.

Herb gardeners have a big advantage, though. A fragrant herb garden is a confusing place for deer, which rely on their sense of smell to warn them of predators. Instead of raiding your herb garden, they'll wander over to the fruit trees and tulips down the street, so you can appreciate these magnificent creatures from afar.

Natural Selection

Growing the right plants is your first line of defense against deer. While no plant is deer-proof when these animals are hungry, rosemary comes close. Its spiky leaves emit a cloud of fragrance that deer dislike. Other Mediterranean herbs, such as oregano, sage and thyme, have a similar effect.

Feeding deer is a bad idea; once they are attracted to an area, it's difficult to keep them away.

The plants illustrated in this sunny garden have escaped browsing deer in different regions, but by all means experiment. If you love spring bulbs, tuck in some daffodils, which are more deer-resistant than tulips. Deer also will ignore many native ornamental grasses, which are lovely additions to any herb garden.

Tips and Tricks

Gardening successfully in deer country depends on many other factors, such as weather, the season and even the attitudes of your neighbors. Here in Texas, many people put out "deer corn" in fall and winter, believing they're helping the poor deer—but they're not. This lures the animals closer to your garden and makes them dependent on a nutritionally deficient diet. The high-carbohydrate content of corn can cause malnutrition and liver damage, and even can prevent deer from digesting their normal forage of native plants. Deer corn should be used only as bait by hunters during hunting season. Your job is to convince your neighbors that *feeding deer is a bad idea*; once deer are attracted to a specific area, it's difficult

to keep them from returning.

Also, remember to protect vulnerable young transplants before they become established. You can use a physical barrier such as a wire cage or plant thorny shrubs, such as barberry, at the edge of the garden.

Or, try spraying the garden perimeter with a deer repellent, such as Liquid Fence, Deer Off or Plantskydd. Most of these widely available products are made of natural ingredients, such as bloodmeal, hot peppers, garlic, eggs and mint. Be sure to reapply them after rain or heavy watering.

Some gardeners claim marking their garden territory with urine repels deer, too. (If you try this, consider your neighbors, who probably would prefer you do this discretely.) A dog in the yard, even a small one, also can be very effective at deterring unwanted animals.

Above all, don't become discouraged. Remember: You're *smarter* than the deer!

Challenge Us

If you have a challenging garden site and would like a design solution, or simply want to create a new look for a border or bed, write to us. From time to time, we'll select a reader's challenge and provide a simple "Garden Spaces" design solution. Send your requests to letters@OgdenPubs.com, with "Design Challenge" in the subject line.



Self-Watering Containers



20" Ochre

16" Blue

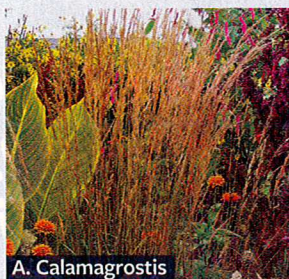
These innovative containers are the easiest way to ensure beautiful, healthy patio gardens. Hidden inside each pot is a 1-gallon reservoir, water indicator, and easy-fill funnel to keep plants lush and healthy all summer long. The pots look like ceramic but are made of lightweight polypropylene and weigh less than 3 pounds.

GARDENER'S SUPPLY EXCLUSIVE
CORTINA PLANTER, 16" - \$39.95 | 20" - \$49.95

	CORK 16" #37-778 20" #37-780
	RUST 16" #37-777 20" #37-779
	MOSS 16" #35-783 20" #35-784
	OCHRE 16" #36-998 20" #36-999
	BLUE 16" #37-124 20" #37-125
	DARK GARNET 16" #37-128 20" #37-129

TO ORDER: CALL GARDENER'S SUPPLY,
888/403-0326 or order online at
readershopping.com. Please specify source
code **MMC90326** and item number.

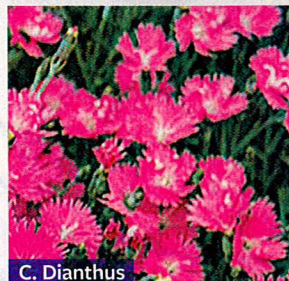
Deer-Resistant Garden



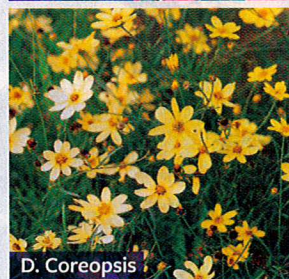
A. Calamagrostis



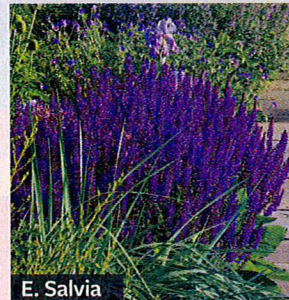
B. Perovskia



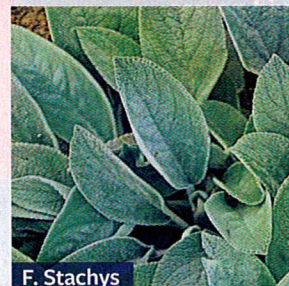
C. Dianthus



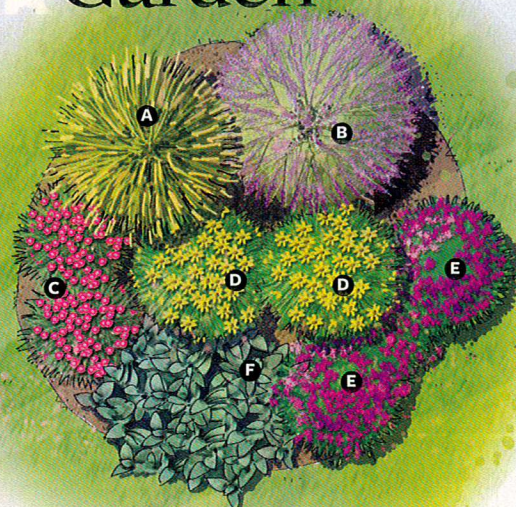
D. Coreopsis



E. Salvia



F. Stachys



This garden plan was created exclusively for our readers by the garden editors at *Better Homes and Gardens*®.

The plants make a stunning display that's shunned by deer. Plant them in a sunny area with average, well-drained soil. You'll receive a box of nine hardy plants in 3-inch pots, a planting diagram, and planting instructions.

The Deer-Resistant Garden contains one plant each of *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster', *Perovskia atriplicifolia*, and *Stachys byzantina* 'Big Ears'; and two plants each of *Coreopsis* 'Moonbeam', *Dianthus* 'Firewitch', and *Salvia* 'May Night'. Cost is \$99 plus shipping.

TO ORDER, CALL WHITE FLOWER FARM,
800/420-2852, or visit readershopping.com. Please specify **MM953471**. Order early; quantities are limited and are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Plants are shipped through June. Sorry, we are unable to ship to APO/FPO addresses, or addresses outside the contiguous United States.