

Yard & Garden



Deer-proofing a garden

around your area.

Keeping deer at bay involves some work and maintenance on the part of a homeowner. There are safe and humane methods to repelling deer, or at least blocking access to the plants worth protecting. Here are the main ways to deer-proof a garden.

Fence It

Fences are one way to deter deer from entering a yard and dining on your garden. Keep in mind that deer can jump fences that are quite tall, but they have to be especially motivated to jump an eight-foot-tall fence. Still, they tend to be weary about scaling a fence when they cannot see what is on the other side. Therefore, if you are fencing out deer, choose a fence that camouflages the garden well and completely encloses the area to be protected. If you do not want the fence to be solid, consider putting stakes or thorny plants within the garden so that the

deer will hesitate to jump into the garden.

Scare Them

Deer are naturally skittish around people, but over time they can become quite complacent around human beings. Once a deer decides that something will not present a threat, the deer can adapt to its presence.

Motion-activated devices may not work, nor the presence of pets. Predator urine is typically an effective way at keeping deer at bay. Bottled coyote urine can be quite effective, although human urine may work as well. Reapplying the product weekly around the plants is a good idea.

Repel the Deer

There are many organic or chemically-based products on the market that deer may find offensive to the taste or smell.

Hot pepper, sulfur and eggs or even the use of soapy water

have been successful in certain instances. The use of blood meal or even human hair around the garden may repel the deer and keep them on a different foraging path. However, remember that any deer that is very hungry may ignore unpleasant tastes or smells for a quick bite.

Change Plants

If other food sources are available, there are some species of plants and trees that deer will avoid. Filling your garden with these plants can help you maintain a beautiful, albeit untasty, environment for deer.

When planting annuals, select among:

- * Alyssum
- * Begonias
- * Calendula
- * Celosia
- * Dianthus
- * Foxglove
- * Geraniums
- * Parsley
- * Poppy

* Snapdragons

In terms of perennials, plant these items once, and deer could stay away:

- * Ageratum
- * Anemone
- * Astibe
- * Bearded iris
- * Catmint
- * Honeysuckle
- * Lantana
- * Monkshood
- * Rock rose
- * Rosemary
- * Soapwort
- * Wisteria

Plant these herbs alongside flowers for even more protection:

- * Chives
- * Eucalyptus
- * Garlic
- * Mint
- * Thyme
- * Wintergreen

Gardeners who use a combination of methods to keep deer out of their yards and gardens may have a higher success rate at deterring these animals.

Creating a beautiful and bountiful garden is a popular pastime for people all across the country. It is important to keep in mind that aesthetically appealing plants may be appetizing to area wildlife, including deer. Those who do not want their gardens to turn into all-you-can-eat buffets for deer, rabbits and other wild animals can take a more proactive approach to gardening.

Deer are opportunists who

will no doubt see your garden as a salad bar ripe with all of their favorite foods. As housing developments continue to encroach on the natural habitats of deer and other animals, these animals are becoming more visible. Deer may not be able to forage for food effectively in their smaller, natural surroundings, or they may become accustomed to the "easy pickings" they find in neighborhood yards. Either way, you may encounter a deer in or

Shortcuts to a lush lawn

There are one million acres of lawn across the country. Many homeowners aspire to having a lush, green lawn as the showcase of their properties. The front lawn can make a statement and indicate to passersby the property owners' personalities and design preferences.

Lawn care takes some dedication and hard work, but there are certain ways to cut down on the amount of effort required to maintain a landscape. By employing a few different shortcuts, you can have a healthy, lush lawn without spending all of your free time cutting the grass or pruning the trees.

*Stop weeds at the start.

Weeding is one of the most time-consuming parts of maintaining a lawn. Weeds can proliferate throughout the lawn if not addressed in a timely manner. Once weeds take root they can become a nuisance, so it's best to treat weeds before they even have a chance to sprout. Apply a preemergent weed control product as soon as possible in the spring and then reapply it about three months later to ensure weeds are eradicated. That equates to much less tedious lawn maintenance during the season.

*Plant a urine-resistant grass. Having a dog and maintaining a lush lawn has always been a par-

ticular conundrum for homeowners. Dog urine is high in nitrogen. While nitrogen, when applied in the correct ratio, can be a lawn-growth stimulant, in the large concentration that occurs in pet urine, it causes the grass to dry up and burn, resulting in bare spots. Replanting with urine-resistant grasses can help cut down on the level of damage to the lawn from your own pet or pets that happen to make potty stops on your property. The grasses most resistant to urine tend to be perennial ryegrasses and fescues.

*Wake up and water. Watering in the early mornings saves time and energy in the long run

by fostering a tougher, more drought-resistant lawn. If you water early in the day, less water will be lost to evaporation. Limit watering to a few times per week, and less if you have had adequate rain. Avoid watering at night, which can expose the lawn to bacteria and attract insects.

*Mow when the lawn is dry. It's not advisable to mow the lawn when it is wet. Slippery conditions can not only make it more dangerous to push a mower, but also slow down the time it can take to tackle the chore. The mower blades can become clogged and coated with wet grass clippings, necessitating

stopping and starting the task. Another thing to consider is lawn diseases spread more readily through wet clippings. Stick to mowing when the lawn is completely dry.

*Let clippings fly. Mulching mowers, or those that just distribute clippings on the lawn as you go, can be healthier for the grass. They will serve as fertilizer and redistribute nutrients to the lawn as they breakdown into the soil. According to "The Organic Lawn Care Manual," leaving clippings on the lawn will fulfill about 25 percent of fertilizer requirements. Plus, you save time bagging up clippings.

*Mow less often. Raise the

mower's blade so that the grass is longer in between cuttings. The taller grass will shade the soil and block weeds from germinating. It also helps improve soil's moisture retention.

*Don't cut corners. Adjusting a landscape design to have arches and curves can reduce the time it takes to mow and edge a property. Hard corners in a landscape will require more time to keep straight and pristine.

Caring for a lawn can take less time and effort than you think.

How to repair unsightly bald spots in your lawn

Lawn care aficionados know how a single bald spot can make an otherwise luscious lawn look worn down and poorly maintained. A bald spot can stick out like a sore thumb, while several bald spots can compromise a home's curb appeal.

Treating bald spots typically depends on what is causing the bald spot. Bugs, dryness, pet waste and damage from mowers are some of the more common causes of bald spots. The following is a breakdown of these different causes and how best to address each situation so you can restore your lawn to its natural beauty.

Dryness

A lawn can go dry because of drought in the summertime or during the winter months when there is not much rain or snowfall. Homeowners cannot change the weather, but they can help their lawn avoid becoming the burned or yellowed turf that often results after extended periods of dryness. Fertilizing the

lawn during the spring and summer is a good first step. This helps the lawn grow in healthy and thick. Once you have fertilized, don't cut the grass too short. When grass is cut too short, the soil struggles to retain moisture, which can eventually lead to bald spots if weather conditions are dry. During especially dry periods in the summer, watering might be necessary. You won't have to water frequently, but be sure to water deeply so the water can reach the roots of the grass.

Pet Waste

Waste from pets can cause bald spots on a yard. This might surprise some homeowners, but pet waste contains a high level of concentrated nitrogen that, when applied to a lawn, can burn the grass and cause bald spots. Urine is most likely to cause bald spots, but fecal matter can as well.

When addressing the problem of pet waste on your lawn, make sure no one else's pets are the cause of the problem. Neigh-

bors out walking their dogs should be discouraged from allowing their dogs to use your lawn as a restroom. If this does not work, then erect a fence or some type of structure that makes it difficult for other people's pets to access your lawn.

When it's your own pet causing the damage, address the spots where your pet relieves itself as quickly as possible. Watering the area within eight hours can significantly reduce the risk of lawn damage by diluting the nitrogen levels. Another way to address the issue is to encourage the animal to use various spots in the yard, rather than continually using the same spot. Flush each area with water immediately after the pet is finished. If the damage is already considerable, remove the damaged grass and reseed the spot.

Mower Damage

Sometimes Mother Nature and man's best friend are not the culprit with regard to bald spots on your lawn. Human error can

cause bald spots, too. Dull mower blades or grass that is cut too low can cause bald spots. Fortunately, this is easily remedied.

To avoid bald spots, make sure mower blades are sharpened at the beginning of each mowing season, as dull blades

damage the grass, which is then forced to use valuable nutrients to treat torn grass, weakening the lawn over time. When mowing, make sure you're not cutting too low so the soil can retain as much moisture as possible. This will necessitate more frequent mowing, but this, too, can pre-

vent bald spots, as it ensures those parts of the grass that contain chlorophyll will not be removed.

Bald spots can turn a pristine lawn into an eyesore. But treating bald spots can be easy and, when done effectively, the lawn can be restored quickly.

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