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MontGuide

Deer-resistant Ornamental Plants for Your Garden

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A listing of flowers, vines, shrubs and trees that deer don't prefer to eat.

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DEER CAN WIPE OUT YOUR GARDEN FASTER THAN

almost any other pest. Two species common in Montana – the white-tailed deer and the mule deer – eat flowers and foliage in summer and browse on tender buds in winter. Even urban gardens are vulnerable to deer damage.

Through the years frustrated gardeners have tried different remedies to keep the pests away from their plants. Painting tree trunks with sulphonated linseed oil worked sporadically, but the concoction couldn't be used on tender perennials and on the buds and thin shoots of trees. Hanging bars of heavily perfumed soap, items of old sweaty clothing, or linen bags filled with human hair from the tips of tree branches sometimes works for a week or so until the deer become accustomed to the scent. Unfortunately, your festooned trees will look ridiculous. Dried blood or blood meal sprinkled around the garden border also works for a few days until the deer get used to the smell, but it must be reapplied after a heavy rain. Commercial rabbit repellents affect deer too. Spray the plants as soon as new spring growth begins and at weekly intervals throughout the season. But some deer get used to the smell and bitter taste of the fungicide thiram, the active ingredient in the repellent, and will resume browsing.

A fence around the garden is a more permanent solution, but it must be at least eight feet high and slant outward from the protected area at a 45 degree angle. You may want to top it with another foot or two of electric fence, but this has the effect of turning your garden into a fortress and is exceedingly difficult to work pleasingly into the landscape.

Most of Montana is deer country and you'll fight a battle you cannot win if you insist on planting species the deer love to eat. The best way to solve your deer problems is to plant things deer don't prefer. There are many ornamental plants that will grow in our state that fall into this category. If you feel this limits your planting scheme intolerably, then place plants deer love to eat close to the house and those they don't prefer farther out in the yard where the animals are more apt to wander. Unfortunately, deer will even come onto front porches. Remember, no plant is safe if the deer are hungry enough.

Following is a list of plants that generally grow well in our state and that deer will usually ignore if their natural food supply is sufficient. Species is supplied where it is known, but many references list only the genus. In that case we've given the genus followed by "spp.," the abbreviation for the plural of "species." Some species of a particular genus will grow under our conditions; some will not. For example, according to the USDA Hardiness Zone rating, *Aquilegia canadensis*, the American columbine, is a Zone 3 plant and will grow here but *Aquilegia bertolonii*, the Alpinerock Columbine, a Zone 6 plant, won't. It's up to you to plant only those perennial species that are adapted to Zones 2 and 3 in eastern Montana gardens, Zones 3 and 4 in central Montana gardens, and Zones 4 and 5 in western Montana gardens.



Yucca

A Partial List of Deer-resistant Garden Plants

USDA HARDINESS ZONE	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Ground Covers		
4-8	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Carpet Bugle
2-7	<i>Convallaria majalis</i>	Lily-of-the-Valley
3-8	<i>Lamium</i> spp.	Dead Nettle
5-9	<i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>	Pachysandra
4-8	<i>Vinca minor</i>	Periwinkle
Trees		
4-7	<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway Maple
3-9	<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Silver Maple
2-6	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>	Paper Birch
2-6	<i>Betula pendula</i>	European White
4-6	<i>Crataegus</i> spp.	Hawthorn
4-9	<i>Gleditsia tricanthos</i>	Honey Locust
3-7	<i>Picea abies</i>	Norway Spruce
2-6	<i>Picea glauca</i>	White Spruce
3-7	<i>Picea pungens</i>	Colorado Blue
3-7	<i>Pinus nigra</i>	Austrian Pine
3-7	<i>Pinus mugo</i>	Mugo Pine
3-7	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scotch Pine
3-7	<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	Canada Hemlock

USDA HARDINESS ZONE	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Flowers		
3-8	<i>Achillea</i> spp.	Yarrow
3-9	<i>Aquilegia</i> spp.	Columbine
4-9	<i>Astilbe</i> spp.	Astilbe
4-9	<i>Coreopsis</i> spp.	Tickseed
3-9	<i>Dianthus</i> spp.	Pinks
2-9	<i>Dicentra</i> spp.	Bleeding Heart
3-8	<i>Digitalis</i> spp.	Foxglove
3-8	<i>Echinacea</i> spp.	Purple Coneflower
4-8	<i>Epimedium</i> spp.	Epimedium
4-9	<i>Eupatorium purpureum</i>	Joe-Pye-Weed
4-8	<i>Geranium</i> spp.	Lilac Cranesbill
4-8	<i>Helianthus</i> spp.	Sunflower
4-9	<i>Helleborus</i> spp.	Hellebore
3-9	<i>Iberis</i> spp.	Candytuft
3-10	<i>Iris</i> spp.	Iris
5-9	<i>Lavandula</i> spp.	Lavender
3-9	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Spike Gay-Feather
4-8	<i>Lychnis coronaria</i>	Rose Campion
4-8	<i>Narcissus</i> spp.	Daffodil
3-8	<i>Pulmonaria</i> spp.	Lungwort
4-10	<i>Rudbeckia</i> spp.	Coneflower
2-8	<i>Solidago</i> spp.	Goldenrod
3-8	<i>Veronica</i> spp.	Speedwell
5-10	<i>Yucca</i> spp.	Yucca

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USDA HARDINESS ZONE	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Vines		
3-8	<i>Celastrus</i> spp.	Bittersweet
3-8	<i>Clematis</i> spp.	Clematis
4-9	<i>Hedera helix</i> 'Baltica'	Baltic Ivy
3-8	<i>Lonicera</i> spp.	Honeysuckle
Shrubs		
2-6	<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	Lead Plant
3-7	<i>Berberis Koreana</i>	Korean Barberry
4-8	<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Japanese Barberry
2-7	<i>Caragana arborescens</i> 'Sutherland'	Sutherland Caragana
2-7	<i>Caragana arborescens</i> 'Lorbergi'	Fernleaf Caragana
4	<i>Caragana aurantiaca</i>	Pygmy Caragana
2-3	<i>Caragana frutex</i>	Russian Caragana
2-3	<i>Caragana frutex globosa</i>	Dwarf Russian Caragana
2	<i>Caragana erincaea</i>	Maximowicz Peashrub
2-7	<i>Cornus sericea</i>	Red Osier Dogwood
3-6	<i>Eleagnus commutata</i>	Silverberry
2	<i>Halimodendron halodendron</i>	Siberian Salt Tree
4-9	<i>Juniperus chinensis</i>	Chinese Juniper
4-9	<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> 'Hetzii'	Hetz Juniper

USDA HARDINESS ZONE	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
2-6	<i>Juniperus communis</i> 'Vase Shape'	Vase Common Juniper
4-9	<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> 'Plumosa'	Compact Andorra Juniper
4-9	<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> 'Lividus'	Lividus Creeping Juniper
3-7	<i>Juniperus sabina</i> 'Von Ehron'	Von Ehron Savin Juniper
4-8	<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i>	Beautybush
3-8	<i>Lonicera</i> spp.	Honeysuckle
4-8	<i>Philadelphus</i> spp.	Mockorange
3-8	<i>Prunus americana</i>	American plum
2-6	<i>Prunus tenella</i>	Dwarf Russian Almond
3-7	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	Common Buckthorn
4-6	<i>Rhus trilobata</i>	Fragrant Sumac
2-7	<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	Rugose rose
3-7	<i>Rosa virginiana</i>	Virginia Rose
5-8	<i>Rosa wichuraiana</i>	Memorial Rose
2-6	<i>Sheperdia argentea</i>	Silver Buffaloberry
3-8	<i>Spiraea</i> spp.	Bridalwreath
3-7	<i>Syringa villosa</i>	Late Lilac
3-7	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Common Lilac
3-8	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Highbush Cranberry
5-10	<i>Yucca</i> spp.	Yucca



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