

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. 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.



A Partial List of Deer-resistant Garden Plants

USDA
HARDINESS
ZONE

BOTANICAL
NAME

COMMON
NAME

Ground Covers

4-8	Ajuga reptans	Carpet Bugle
2-7	Convallaria majalis	Lily-of-the-Valley
3-8	Lamium spp.	Dead Nettle
5-9	Pachysandra terminalis	Pachysandra
4-8	Vinca minor	Periwinkle

Flowers

3-8	Achillea spp.	Yarrow
3-9	Aquilegia spp.	Columbine
4-9	Astilbe spp.	Astilbe
4-9	Coreopsis spp.	Tickseed
3-9	Dianthus spp.	Pinks
2-9	Dicentra spp.	Bleeding Heart
3-8	Digitalis spp.	Foxglove
3-8	Echinacea spp.	Purple Coneflower
4-8	Epimedium spp.	Epimedium
4-9	Eupatorium purpureum	Joe-Pye-Weed
4-8	Geranium spp.	Lilac Cranesbill
4-8	Helianthus spp.	Sunflower
4-9	Helleborus spp.	Hellebore
3-9	Iberis spp.	Candytuft
3-10	Iris spp.	Iris
5-9	Lavandula spp.	Lavender

USDA
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COMMON
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3-9	Liatris spicata	Spike Gay-Feather
4-8	Lychnis coronaria	Rose Campion
4-8	Narcissus spp.	Daffodil
3-8	Pulmonaria spp.	Lungwort
4-10	Rudbeckia spp.	Coneflower
2-8	Solidago spp.	Goldenrod
3-8	Veronica spp.	Speedwell
5-10	Yucca spp.	Yucca

Vines

3-8	Celastrus spp.	Bittersweet
3-8	Clematis spp.	Clematis
4-9	Hedera helix 'Baltica'	Baltic Ivy
3-8	Lonicera spp.	Honeysuckle

Shrubs

2-6	Amorpha canescens	Lead Plant
3-7	Berberis Koreana	Korean Barberry
4-8	Berberis thunbergii	Japanese Barberry
2-7	Caragana arborescens 'Sutherland'	Sutherland Caragana
2-7	Caragana arborescens 'Lorbergi'	Fernleaf Caragana
4	Caragana aurantiaca	Pygmy Caragana
2-3	Caragana frutex	Russian Caragana

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USDA HARDINESS ZONE	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
2-3	<i>Caragana frutex</i> <i>globosa</i>	Dwarf Russian Caragana
2	<i>Caragana</i> <i>maximowicziana</i>	Maximowicz Peashrub
2-7	<i>Cornus sericea</i>	Red Osier Dogwood
2-7	<i>Eleagnus</i> <i>angustifolia</i>	Russian Olive
3-6	<i>Eleagnus</i> <i>commutata</i>	Silverberry
2	<i>Halimodendron</i> <i>halodendron</i>	Siberian Salt Tree
4-9	<i>Juniperus</i> <i>chinensis</i>	Chinese Juniper
4-9	<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> 'Hetzii'	Hetz Juniper
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

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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

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 Birch
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 Spruce
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

Local deer resistant plants

Local experience with plants deer seldom eat

Never eaten or seldom touched

Lilacs
Ash trees
Mock orange
Burning Bush
Yew
Caryopteris (Bluebeard)
Oak Leaf Sumac (*Rhus trilobata*)
Grow Low Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)
Siberian Pea & other Caragana
Honeysuckle
Salvia
Echinacea
Rudbeckia
Daylily (maybe flowers)
Iris

Occasionally nibbled but not severely

Golden Currant
Black Elderberry
Nanking Cherry
Maple trees
Gaillardia
Amaranth

Severely eaten

Staghorn Sumac
Smooth Sumac
Ninebark
Apple trees
Plum trees
Penstemon
Cherry
Lily
Calendula
Chrysanthemum