

# White-Tail Deer

Are deer and other wildlife eating your flowers, shrubs and trees? Connecticut's landscape provides an ideal food source for many types of wildlife, particularly the white-tail deer. The number of deer in Connecticut has increased from 12 deer in 1900, to an estimated 76,000 deer in 2000, with the highest percentage in Fairfield County. Along with the escalating deer population in Connecticut has come a growing deer tick population.

## Deer and Deer Ticks

Deer play a critical role in the reproductive capacity of the deer tick, *Ixodes scapularis*. They are the preferred host for the adult female tick. After feeding, female ticks may lay up to 1,500 eggs. Studies have demonstrated that the size of the deer tick population is directly related to the size of the deer population. *Deer do not infect ticks with Lyme disease*; ticks become infected after feeding on mice and other small mammals.

## Deer Behavior

Deer live at the edge of the woods, where they can find shrubs and other small plants to eat. They browse a wide variety of flowers and shrubs, many commonly used by homeowners to landscape their properties. Landscaped yards provide deer with an ideal food source - "a deer buffet."

Deer quickly become habituated to noises,

lights and other attempts by homeowners to dissuade them from their properties. Sprays, soaps and other repellents can be used on plants to deter the deer. Repellents are usually odor or taste-based products. These can be effective, but they must be applied often to protect new growth during the growing season. For best results, switch type every few weeks.

## Landscaping and Tick Control

One component of a strategy to reduce your risk of Lyme disease is not to attract deer to your yard. Focus your efforts on reducing tick numbers, particularly in areas of your property you commonly use.

Create a "tick safe zone." Increase light and reduce dampness. Prune trees, clear brush, and remove leaf litter. Consider planting deer resistant plants and shrubs.

For more information refer to the Target Lyme Disease Brochure, *Get Your Backyard in the Zone*.

## Physical Barriers

Fencing can be used to control nuisance deer on your property. Deer fencing, typically 6 to 8 feet in height and buried one foot deep, can be very successful in protecting large garden beds or even entire properties.

There are a variety of fences that can be installed, such as an electric or nylon mesh fence. The type of fence used is determined by the deer density.

## Plant Selection

Damage to ornamental plants by deer has increased during the past decade. Browsing damage may be reduced by selecting less-preferred species or by establishing susceptible plants in protected areas. Designing deer resistance into your landscaping plans is another approach to deterring deer.

### Suggested Deer Resistant Plantings

#### Annuals:

- ◇ Alyssum (Lobularia)
- ◇ Dusty miller (Senecio)
- ◇ Forget-me-not (Myosotis)
- ◇ Marigold (Tagetes)
- ◇ Nasturtium (Tropaeolum)
- ◇ Pansy (Viola)
- ◇ Sage (Salvia)
- ◇ Spiderflower (Cleome)
- ◇ Verbena (Verbena)
- ◇ Vinca (Catharanthus)

#### Perennials:

- ◇ Beebalm (Monarda didyma)
- ◇ Bleeding heart (Dicentra)
- ◇ Catmint (Nepeta)
- ◇ Columbine (Aquilegia)
- ◇ Foxglove (Digitalis)
- ◇ Goldenrod (Solidago)

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- ◇ Lady's mantle (Alchemilla)
- ◇ Lamb's ears (Stachys)
- ◇ Lavender (Lavandula)
- ◇ Lily of the valley (Convallaria)
- ◇ Mayapple (Podophyllum)
- ◇ Mint (Mentha)
- ◇ Monkshood (Aconitum)
- ◇ Oregano (Origanum)
- ◇ Poppy (Papaver)
- ◇ Rhubarb (Rheum)
- ◇ Russian Sage (Perovskia)
- ◇ Silvermound (Artemisia)
- ◇ Thyme (Thymus)
- ◇ Yarrow (Achillea)

#### **Bulbs, Corms and Other:**

- ◇ Daffodil (Narcissus)
- ◇ Hens & chicks (Sempervivum)
- ◇ Hyacinths (Hyacinthus)
- ◇ Iris (Iridaceae)
- ◇ Ornamental chives (Allium)
- ◇ Snowdrops (Galanthus)

#### **Vines:**

- ◇ Wisteria (Wisteria)
- ◇ Virginia creeper (Parthenocissus)

#### **Shrubs and Trees:**

- ◇ Andromeda (Pieris japonica)
- ◇ Boxwood (Buxus)
- ◇ Butterfly bush (Buddleia)
- ◇ Cotoneaster (Cotoneaster)
- ◇ Leucothoes (Leucothoe)
- ◇ Spirea (Spiraea)
- ◇ Spruce (Picea)
- ◇ Weigela (Weigela)

*No plant is completely deer resistant. The preference for certain plants can change from herd to herd and from season to season. Susceptibility depends on deer density and availability to other food sources.*

**Consult your local garden store to learn about the toxicity of plants.**

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**Deer and Your Yard:  
Tips on Discouraging Deer  
on Your Property**