

# --- [ DEER MANAGEMENT OPTIONS ] ---

By JASON WILES

Deer, particularly too many deer in a given area, can destroy valuable landscape plants. Hungry deer eat the plants. Male deer also damage young trees by rubbing their antlers on them.

There are many solutions to the problem of unwanted landscape damage caused by deer. The key is analyzing the situation, planning the proper solution and applying the solution in an effective manner. There is usually no "silver bullet", but many "bullets" that must be used in the proper ways and under the proper conditions.

There are three main categories of deer control—fencing, scaring devices and repellents.

Fencing can be broken down into three groups:

1) Invisible mesh barrier, polypropylene fences that are 8' high which people commonly surround their properties with for a direct physical barrier.

2) Baited electric fencing which attracts deer to the fence instead of what's inside of the fence for a safe correction that trains the deer to stay away.

3) The dog fence, common in orchards, uses dogs to chase deer out of protected areas while containing those dogs in certain areas you choose.

Scaring devices come in various forms as well. Successful scaring devices startle deer and surprise them. Water sprayers, ultrasonic, and sonic devices are the most commonly used. The greatest success from scaring devices is directly related to an abrupt noise or other intrusion into the deer's space that surprises the deer enough to cause them to flee. Noise strength, size detection and coverage are very important when using scaring devices.

Repellents can be classified in two areas—crop use and non-crop use. Repellents that are used for crops wash off easily because, in order to be EPA-approved for crops, they must wash off easily. These repellents are only designed with a 7- to 14-day residual. Non-crop use repellents should have an extender or a rain-resistant formula allowing the repellent to last through rainy periods causing a 2- to 3-month residual. Repellent users must be aware of proper mixing, application, wind, weather conditions, temperature and other factors when spraying.

—The author is general manager of *Deerbusters*, Frederick, Md., specializing in deer and wildlife management products. 1-800/248-337 or [www.deerbusters.com](http://www.deerbusters.com).

## LM readers speak out on this common, growing nuisance.

The following are some of our readers' experiences with deer control.

**Greg Wurst**, Tuttle Creek Corps of Engineers, Manhattan, Kans., tried to discourage deer from rubbing their antlers on small trees by hanging bars of soap on tree limbs—with limited success. This season he's driving a metal fence post beside each tree he wants to protect reasoning that deer don't like the feel of metal on their antlers.

**Grandin Landscape & Supply Co.**, Charleston, RI, says that bars of Ivory soap provide some protection, as well as the repellent "Deer Away".

A note from **Designscape**, Nashville, Ind., suggests fencing (exclusion) for small areas; it's cost effective. On larger areas the company uses several repellents. "We've had reasonable success with them," says the note.

**Keith Farrington**, True Turf Systems, Bayville, NJ, places human hair on the perimeter of properties experiencing deer damage with a 70 percent decline in damage.

**Bruce L. Smidt**, Leeward Tree Farm, Casper, Wy., deals with two different type of deer. White tail deer eat mugho and Austrian pine, and mule deer love cherries,

especially north star and montmorency. Hot sauces and moth balls didn't seem to work, but a 7'6" fence and a radio on a timer (30 minute on/off cycle) keep the muleys away, he reports.

**Leonard E. Phillips**, Park and Tree Superintendent, Wellesley Hills, Mass., plants a border of lambs ear (*Stachys byzantina*) around beds he wants to protect. After one season the lambs ear has grown into solid border. "There is something about the plant that repulses the deer," advises Phillips. He says the border also discourages rabbits from feeding on his ornamentals.

**Richard Lavine**, CGCS, Peacock Gap Golf and Country Club, San Rafael, Calif., puts 4" flower containers filled with blood meal near newly planted flowers. He digs the containers into the earth flush with the ground. A long stake in each one keeps dogs from digging them up.

Several readers say Milorganite fertilizer keeps deer away. "The key to using Milorganite is putting it out before deer start eating plants," says **Whitt Cline**, Lake Murray Landscaping, Columbia, SC. **LM**