



Deer in the Urban Landscape

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Deer are a major menace to Hill Country landscapes. Rural landscapes have the biggest problems, but urban landscapes often are attacked as well.

Landscape protection options are limited to fencing or other physical barriers, chemical repellents and resistant plants. Fencing is expensive and unsightly for most landscape situations. It is most practical as cage protection for small trees until the trees grow taller than the deer can reach.

Deer-resistant plants are the ideal solution; but, unfortunately, few plants are fully deer proof. Many species that are unattractive to deer when other browse is plentiful become deer candy when food is in short supply. The combination of heat and summer droughts almost invariably make late summer and fall a particularly trying time for deer-plagued areas.

Homeowners that feed deer often make the problem worse for themselves and their neighbors. Feeding of deer tends to attract more deer than can be fed and this coupled with a reduced fear of man usually adds to landscape damage.

Variability in browsing pressure plus variable taste preferences by individual deer makes it impossible to compile a fool-proof list of resistant plants -- unless the list is made very short. With this disclaimer in place, the following list of resistant plants was compiled.

Most of the plants listed are from my own observations, as well as suggestions by Fredericksburg nurseryman-landscapers John Dodds, Ken Schindler and Chester Langerhans. Numerous other individuals have also provided input.

Large Trees

None have been observed to be resistant enough to leave unprotected. Fortunately, trees can be caged until they grow taller than the deer when small. The best approach is to make a cage around each tree until it grows beyond the deer's reach.

Small Trees or Large Shrubs

Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*)3
 Fig (*Ficus spp.*)
 Flameleaf Sumac (*Rhus lanceolata*)3
 Mountain Laurel (*Sophora secundiflora*)1 3
 Roughleaf dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*)3 4
 Texas Buckeye (*Acsculus arguta*)3 4
 Texas Persimmon (Deer-Resistant Landscape Plants)

Shrubs

Abelia (*Abelia spp.*)
 Acuba (*Acuba japonica*)4
 Agarita (*Berberis trifoliolata*)1 3
 Autumn Aster (*Aster spp.*)2
 Autumn Sage (*Salvia greggii*)1 3 4
 Blackberry (*Rubus spp.*) (thorny only)2 3
 Boxwood (*Buxus microphylla*)1
 Ceniza/Texas Sage (*Leucophyllum spp.*)3
 Cotoneaster (Coral Beauty) (*Cotoneaster dammeri*)1
 Dwarf Chinese Holly (*Ilex cornuta*)
 Dwarf Yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*)1 3
 Eleagnus (*Eleagnus spp.*)
 Evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*)3
 Fragrant mimosa (*Mimosa borealis*)3
 Germander (*Teucrium spp.*)
 Goldcup (*Hypericum spp.*)
 Japanese arealia (*Arelia sieboldii*)
 Jerusalem Cherry (*Solanum pseudocapsicum*)
 Juniper (*Juniperus spp.*)2 3
 Lantana (*Lantana horrida*) (natives resistant, hybrids not)3
 Lavender (*Lavandula spp.*)
 Mexican Buckeye (*Ungnadia speciosa*)3
 Mexican Oregano (*Poliomintha longifolia*)
 Mexican silktassle (*Garrya lindheimeri*)3
 Nandina (*Nandina spp.*)2 4
 Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)1
 Pampas Grass (*Cortaderia spp.*)
 Pyracantha (*Pyracantha coccinea*)2
 Red-leaf or Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)
 Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)1
 Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)
 Turks cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*)3 4

Wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*)2 3

Perennial Succulents and Lilies

Cactus (*Opuntia spp.*) any with stout spines1 3
 Hen and chickens (*Sempervivum spp.*) (spiny varieties)
 Lily of the Nile (*Agapanthus spp.*)
 Red Yucca (*Hesperaloe parviflora*) --flowers eaten3
 Sacahuista/Bear Grass/Nolina (*Nolina spp.*)3
 Sotol (*Dasylirion spp.*)3
 Yucca (*Yucca spp.*)3

Vines

Carolina Jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)
 Star Jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*)2

Ground Covers

Aarons Beard (*Hypericum calycinum*)
 Asiatic Jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*)2
 Carpet Bugle (*Aiuga reptans*)2 4
 Monkey grass (*Ophiopogon japonica*)2
 Myrtle (*Vinca major*)4
 Santolina (*Santolina spp.*)1 3
 Spearmint (*Menta spicata*)3
 Thyme (*Thymus spp.*)

Flowers, Ferns, Herbs

Ageratum (*Ageratum spp.*)
 Begonia (*Begonia spp.*)2
 Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)3
 Blackfoot Daisy (*Melampodium lecanthum*)3
 Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*)3
 Cast-Iron Plant (*Aspidistra lurida*)4
 Cedar Sage (*Salvia roemeriana*)1 3 4
 Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum spp.*) (flowers eaten)
 Coreopsis (*Coreopsis spp.*)3
 Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*)
 Dusty Miller (*Senecio cineraria*)1
 Flame Acanthus (*Anisacanthus wrightii*)
 Foxglove (*Digitalis spp.*)3
 Holly Fern (*Cyrtomium falicatum*)4
 Indigo Spires (*Salvia spp.*)
 Iris (*Iris spp.*)2
 Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*)1 3
 Mexican Bush Sage (*Salvia leucantha*)2

Mexican Mint Marigold (*Tagetes spp.*)1
Periwinkle (*Vinca rosea*)1
Purple Cone Flower (*Echinacea angustifolia*)2 3
Savory (*Satureia spp.*)
Sword Fern (*Nephrolepis spp.*)4
Verbena (*Verbena spp.*)3
Wood Fern (*Dryopteris spp.*)3 4
Yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*)3
Zexmenia (*Zexmenia hispida*)3
Zinnia (*Zinnia spp.*)2

Key to comments

- 1 Rarely if ever eaten
- 2 Observed heavily eaten under pressure
- 3 Texas Natives
- 4 Shade tolerant

For further information on deer resistant plants, see the article on [Camouflage Gardening](#) which contains an extensive list of deer-resistant plants as well as the site titled [Deer Control in the Garden](#).