The Most Deer Resistant Plants for Southeastern NC

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Minimizing Deer Damage

- Understanding Deer Behavior
- Repellents and Fencing
- Most Resistant Plants
- Consult ‘Deer Resistant Plants’ factsheet for deer favorites!
Understanding Deer Behavior

- **Browsers, not grazers**
  - Eat woody and broadleaf plants, not grasses
  - Reach up to 6’

- **Creatures of habit**
  - Previous damage often indicates future damage potential
Deer Behavior

- No sharp upper teeth
  - Jerk stems – ragged, torn edges
  - May pull up newly planted annuals, perennials
- Picky eaters – have favorites
Deer Fencing

- Effective but expensive
- Best in high pressure areas
  - Vegetables and fruit
- 8’ tall woven wire
- Electric
  - Multi-wire, 10” from ground, 12” apart
  - Angled or upright
- Plans available: [http://extension.missouri.edu/p/MP685](http://extension.missouri.edu/p/MP685)
Deer Repellents

- Repel by smell or taste
- **Must reapply often** (every few weeks to months)
- Work best when **applied before** deer problems become serious!
- Many products available - Alternate for best results
Zoning the Landscape

Divide landscape into zones

- **High management**
  - Grow plants deer most likely to damage
  - Close to house
  - Protect by fencing or frequent applications of repellents

- **Low management**
  - Use only highly deer resistant plants
  - Essential next to woods
Deer Resistant Plants

- Less expensive and effective long term
- Deer prefer fertilized and irrigated plants!
- Flower buds are favorites
- Deer will eat almost anything in spring – tender new growth
- Taste preferences vary from deer to deer and season to season!
Deer Resistant Plants

- Deer Resistant ≠ Deer Proof!
- Deer resistant plants are those deer prefer not to eat
  - May nibble but will usually not demolish
- Will eat most anything rather than starve!
Large Trees

- Deer cannot reach once lowest foliage is over 6’
- May damage when young
  - Protect with cages, repellents
- Choose trees with upright branching

Ginkgo tree
Small Trees

- More likely to be damaged – branches within deer feeding range

- **Crapemyrtle**
  - Tree forms rarely damaged
  - New, shrub types sometimes damaged

‘Cherry Dazzle’ Crapemyrtle
Choosing Crapemyrtles

- Consider:
  - Mature Size
    - Range: 5’ – 35’!
  - Growth Habit
  - Bark
  - Fall Color
  - Mildew Resistance
  - Flower Color

- Learn more:
  http://www.clemson.edu/crapemyrtle
Vitex, Chaste Tree

- *Vitex agnus-castus*
- Large shrub or multi-stemmed tree
- Full sun, drought tolerant
- 10’-15’ high and wide
- Aromatic blue flowers all summer
- Very tough!
Vitex, Chaste Tree

When grown as a shrub, can cut back each year like butterfly bush (back to 2’ tall)

Tree form specimens usually have multiple trunks
Red Buckeye

- *Aesculus pavia*
- Native, blooms mid-spring
- 10’-20’
- Attracts hummingbirds
- Understory tree, best in part shade and moist soil
Southern Wax Myrtle

- *Morella cerifera*
- Sun – Lt. shade, moist to dry soil
- 10’-15’ x 10’-15’
- Dwarf forms exist
  - Variety *pumila*
- Native, Evergreen
- Exceptionally tough
- Drought, salt and pH tolerant
- Prone to ice and wind damage
Southern Wax Myrtle
Tree Form
Evergreen Shrubs

- Frequently damaged in winter
- Palms are very deer resistant. Hardy shrub palms:
  - **Dwarf palmetto**
    - native
  - **Needle palm**
    - Both grow 4’-5’ tall and wide; prefer part shade and moist soil
Low Growing Evergreens

- **Dwarf Yaupon**
  - Very small leaves

- **‘Carissa’ Holly**
  - Larger leaves, single spine on tip

- Both 3’-4’ tall, 4’-5’ wide, sun – part shade, drought tolerant
Japanese Plum Yew

*Cephalotaxus harringtonia*

- Shade or sun
- Well drained soil
- ‘Duke Gardens’ grows 3’-4’ x 4’-5’
- ‘Fastigiata’ is an upright, columnar variety, 10’ x 4’
Rosemary

- *Rosmarinus officinalis*
- **Very tough!**
- Blue flowers Feb-April
- Ornamental and culinary
- Upright and weeping cultivars available
- **Upright types** grow 4’-6’ tall and wide!
- **Weeping types** grow 2’-3’ tall and 4’-6’ wide
Gardenia

- Sun – part shade, moist to average soil
- Most varieties 5’ x 5’
- New Cultivar:
  - ‘Frost Proof’
    - 3’ x 4’
    - Double flowers
    - Resistant to whitefly?
Loropetalum

- Large to small purple leaved shrubs with fringy pink spring flowers
- Best in part shade, moist, acid soil
- ‘Purple Pixie’ – a true dwarf (?) Cascading habit, 2’-3’ x 4’-5’
- ‘Purple Diamond’ – intense purple all summer (?) 4’-5’ high and wide
Cleyera

- *Ternstroemia gymnanthera*
- Sun to full shade
- 8’+ tall x 6’+ wide, to 15’ tall
- Well drained soil
- Tolerates heavy pruning but more attractive when grown natural
Tea Olive
*Osmanthus fragrans*

- Large – 12’ x 8’ or more
- Can be limbed up
- Part shade, moist but well drained soil
- Flowers in fall – extremely fragrant, drifting
‘William Penn’ Barberry

- *Berberis* x ‘William Penn’
- 4’ x 4’
- Sun, well drained soil
- Drought tolerant
- Very thorny
- Bronze-purple in winter
- Yellow flowers, spring
- New growth flushed burgundy
‘William Penn’ Barberry
Ornamental Grasses

- As a group, ornamental grasses are highly deer resistant
- Low maintenance – cut back in Jan/Feb
- Most need full sun

Many beyond Pampas Grass!!!
Muhly Grass
*Muhlenbergia capillaris*

- 3’ - 4’ tall in bloom
- Blooms late fall
- Well drained soil
- Sun!
- Drought tolerant
- Semi-evergreen, cut back late winter
Panic Grass, Switch Grass

- *Panicum virgatum*
- Native to E. US
- Full sun, drought tolerant
- ‘Prairie Fire’
  3’ x 2’, burgundy leaf tips
- ‘Northwind’
  5’ x 2’, upright
- ‘Cloud Nine’
  large,  8’ x 6’, strong stems
Miscanthus, Maiden Grass

- *Miscanthus sinensis*
- Large fall blooming grasses
- Many selections ranging from 3’ – 8’
  - ‘Cosmopolitan’ – 5’ -7’, white variegated leaf
  - ‘Adagio’ – 3’-4’, narrow green leaf
Deer Resistant Perennials
Artemisia ‘Powis Castle’

- 2’-3’ x 3’-4’
- Mounds of silver, finely cut foliage
- Sun
- Drought tolerant
- Evergreen but cut back in early spring to prevent legginess
Yucca, Adam’s Needle

- *Yucca filamentosa*
- Evergreen
- 2’ x 2’, summer flower spikes to 5’
- This species NEVER FORMS TRUNKS
- Drought tolerant

‘Color Guard’
- cream variegated foliage
False Indigo

- *Baptisia* - hybrids and species
- 3’ - 4’ x 2’ - 3’
- Sun to light shade
- Bloom late April - May
- Very long lived, clump forming
Gaura

- *Gaura lindheimeri*
- Many varieties
- ‘Pink Cloud’ – 3’ x 2’
- ‘So White’ – 2’ x 2’
- Full sun
- Poor soil
- Deer resistant
- Texas native
- Blooms from late spring through late summer
Arkansas Blue Star

- *Amsonia hubrichtii*
- 3’ x 3’
- Sun, native
- Long lived, clump forming
- Flowers in spring
- Yellow autumn color
- Attractive, ferny foliage all season
- Long lasting cutflower
Blue Star
*Amsonia tabernaemontana*

- SE US native
- Moist to average soils
- Sun to part shade
- Long lived
- Good cutflower
- 3’ x 3’
- Blooms spring, yellow fall color
- *Amsonia illustris* – very similar
‘Maraschino’ Sage

- *Salvia microphylla*
- 3’-4’ x 2’-4’
- Sun to light shade
- Blooms spring and fall
  - Trim after blooming
- Cut back in late winter
- Great for hummingbirds
Mexican Bush Sage  
*Salvia leucantha*

- 4’ x 6’ tall and wide
- ‘Santa Barbara’
  - 3’ tall and wide
- Sun
- Well drained soil, drought tolerant
- Fall blooming
- Loves heat!
Turk’s Cap, Wax Mallow

- *Malvaviscus drummondii*
- Sun – light shade
- 4’-5’ tall and wide
- Red blossoms summer – fall
- Great for hummingbirds, butterflies
- Drought tolerant
Hardy Ferns

- Deer rarely browse ferns
- Most prefer moist, shady areas
- Japanese Painted Fern
  - *Athyrium niponicum* ‘Pictum’
  - Deciduous – dies down in winter
Evergreen Ferns

- Holly Fern
  - *Cyrtomium falcatum*
- Autumn Fern
  - *Dryopteris erythrosora*
- Christmas Fern
  - *Polystichum acrostichoides*
A few more for shade

- **Leopard Plant**
  - *Farfugium japonicum*
  - Clumps of evergreen, round spotted leaves topped with yellow daisy shape flowers in fall

- **Lenten Rose**
  - *Helleborus x hybridus*
  - White, pink or maroon nodding flowers in late winter. Evergreen foliage
Deer Resistant Summer Annuals
Melampodium

- Tough, easy to grow
- Tolerates drought and poor soil
  - Native of Mexico
- Often self sow
- Varieties
  - ‘Million Gold’, 12”
  - ‘Showstar’, to 18”
‘Profusion’

Zinnias

- Hybrid between creeping and common zinnia
- Great disease resistance
- 15”-18” with mounded habit
- All zinnia good nectar source for butterflies

‘Profusion Apricot’
‘Profusion’ Zinnia

‘Profusion White’

‘Profusion Fire’

‘Profusion Cherry’
Ornamental Peppers

- Many varieties
  - Most are hot
  - *Capsicum annuum*
- Easy to grow
- Great in containers

‘Black Pearl’
**Wax Begonia**

- Very adaptable and tough
- Sun or shade, drought tolerant
- Bronze and Green leaf varieties
- White, pink, red flowers
- Stiff, upright to 1’
Periwinkle, Vinca
*Catharanthus roseus*

- Loves heat
- Requires good drainage
- Many varieties
  - ‘Mediterranean’ – low grower, groundcover, baskets
  - ‘Pacifica’ - upright to 12”, many colors
    - Blush, orchid, red, lilac, polka dot, white
- Often self seeds, but reverts to purple
Plants to Avoid!!

Deer Favorites
Deer Favorites
Small Trees

- Redbud
- Atlantic White Cedar
- Fringe Tree
- Fruit Trees
Deer Favorites

Shrubs

- Indian Hawthorn
- Pittosporum
- Euonymous (all)
- Fatsia
- Aucuba
- Azaleas
- Itea
Deer Favorites
Annuals and Perennials

- Ornamental Sweet Potato
- Impatiens
- Celosia
- Pansies
- Daylilies
- Hosta
- Rudbeckia ‘Goldsturm’
- Ivy
- Clematis
Become an Extension Master Gardener!

- Volunteer program – EMG’s help with educational outreach
- Training begins late winter
- Classes meet 1/week at Extension office for 12-14 weeks
- Fee: $75-$100
- Volunteer 40 hours within 1 year of completing training
North Carolina Cooperative Extension

Visit http://ces.ncsu.edu to submit questions to our ‘Ask an Expert’ widget and to find your local Extension center

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