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Effective Strategies for Repelling Deer

This article outlines practical approaches for keeping deer away from your property.

The Challenge of Urban Deer

Deer have increasingly become a challenge in urban landscapes, often invading neighborhoods and damaging plants. While there are many factors driving deer into cities, this piece is dedicated to solutions rather than causes.

Prevention: The Strongest Defense

Deer are naturally curious and will sample most plants at least once. If they find something palatable, they will remember its location and return. One notable advantage of native plants is their inherent resilience; having coevolved with deer, these species often recover robustly after grazing, like their response to pruning. The goal is to prevent deer from severely harming your plants, which requires several thoughtful tactics.

Young deer learn feeding patterns from their mothers and other herd members. Acting early offers the best protection: in Georgia, for example, fawning begins in May and continues through June. After several weeks in concealment, young deer are led by their mothers to learn established feeding routes. This is the ideal period to start deterrence, so begin in early spring to ensure your property does not become a habitual feeding ground.

Safeguarding Trees During Mating Season

During fall, as deer enter mating season, bucks may damage young trees by rubbing their antlers against the bark—a behavior that begins as early as September and lasts through mid-December. Young trees with diameters between 1 and 6 inches are most at risk. Protecting them with wire cages 4 to 6 feet tall and with openings no larger than 1/2 inch is effective. Alternatively, plastic tree guards can be used if wire cages are not preferred.

Methods to Deter Deer

- **Plant Diversity:** Cultivate a mixture of native species. This reduces the likelihood that deer will focus on and strip your favorite plants.
- **Deer-Resistant Borders:** Surround valued plants with varieties that deter deer, especially those with strong scents or prickly textures such as native grasses, sedges, salvias, plants in the mint family, or herbs.
- **Combine Multiple Strategies:** Since no single method works perfectly, employ several at once. Physical barriers like fencing or altering deer access paths can be particularly effective.

Commercial and Practical Deterrents

- [Sonic Repellents](#): Devices that emit sounds to scare off or irritate deer can discourage them from entering.
- [Deer Sprays](#): Specially formulated sprays make plants less appealing to deer and are widely available.
- **Electric Fencing:** Basic electric fencing materials, such as wire, posts, and chargers, are available at most hardware stores. For more details on setting up these barriers, consult [guides](#) on deer fencing principles.