

## Outwitting the deer?

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Weekend gardening in the sandy soils of Central Wisconsin has presented a new gardening challenge for me—outwitting the deer.

My favorite plant, the hosta, is also one of their favorites! To avoid the frustration of seeing a hosta completely stripped of everything but the upright stems, I've learned to limit placement of them to areas of the garden that are inaccessible to the deer – such as a terraced area.

Planting varieties that don't appeal to deer is another strategy. They prefer bland tasting, nontoxic and non-odorous plant material. Choosing varieties that are spicy, toxic or smelly will increase your chances of surviving a deer-munching spree. Plants that I've had much success with include ferns, narcissus, buddleia, achillea, corydalis, asclepias, allium, barberry, hemlock, dicentra, grasses, iris, nepeta, perovskia and salvia.

There are many repellent products now available to help in the fight. Some that I've tried include Deer Off, Liquid Fence and my current favorite, Tree Guard. These are all spray products that must be reapplied at least monthly. They employ ingredients that smell bad to deer. However, I've noticed that once the deer become accustomed to that particular smell, they lose their effectiveness and it's time to change to another product.

Nets and fencing are another option, but for me are impractical, so I've not tried them.

I've recently discovered a nursery in Michigan called Deer-Resistant Landscape Nursery that specializes in deer resistant plants and products. They also have a Web site at [www.deerresistantplants.com](http://www.deerresistantplants.com).

What seems to work best is to choose varieties that are distasteful to the deer, to use a spray product on other varieties, and to regularly change the repellents. Even after doing all of this, it's best to remember that if they are hungry enough, nothing will deter them! I'm always looking for new ideas, so if you've found something that works well for you, please share it!

—Barb Herreid