

The Deer-Resistant Planting Guide

The plants deer leave alone — and the ones to protect. Ratings from Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension.

How to use this guide

Rutgers rates landscape plants on a simple A–D scale: **A = rarely damaged**, **B = seldom**, **C = occasionally**, **D = frequently damaged**. This guide gives you the **A-list** to start with, the **D-list** to avoid or protect, and five tips that actually work. For all 527 rated plants — filtered by your USDA hardiness zone, with photos — visit clearlysolvd.com/deer-resistant-plants (free).

The A-List: plants deer rarely touch

Start your garden here. Every plant below is rated **A** by Rutgers — rarely browsed, even where deer pressure is high.

Perennials: Catmint, Bleeding Heart, Anise Hyssop, Corydalis, Basket of Gold, Dame's Rocket, Butter & Eggs, Common Tansy, European Ginger, Buttercup

Shrubs: Common Boxwood, Barberry, Bayberry, Butterfly Bush, Blue Mist Shrub, Daphne, Fragrant Sumac, Arrowwood Viburnum, Bush Cinquefoil, Drooping Leucothoe

Bulbs: Daffodil, Ornamental Onion (Allium), Siberian Squill, Snowdrops, Autumn Crocus, Winter Aconite, Bluebell, Crown Imperial

Ornamental grasses: Blue Fescue, Blue Oat Grass, Feather Reed Grass, Fountain Grass, Hakonechloa, Big Bluestem, Indian Grass

Ferns: Christmas Fern, Cinnamon Fern, Ostrich Fern, Japanese Painted Fern, Royal Fern, Wood Fern, Hayscented Fern

Groundcovers: Pachysandra, Lily of the Valley, Sweet Woodruff, Bugleweed, Barrenwort, Bearberry, Allegheny Spurge

Annuals: Ageratum, Dusty Miller, Flowering Tobacco, Heliotrope, Pot Marigold, Poppy, Larkspur, Forget-Me-Not

Trees: American Holly, River Birch, Paper Birch, Pawpaw, Katsura Tree, Bottlebrush Buckeye

Deer candy: avoid or protect (the D-list)

These are the plants deer seek out. Rutgers rates them **D** — frequently damaged. If you must grow them, fence them and rotate repellents:

Hosta, Tulip, Yews, American Arborvitae, Rhododendrons, Evergreen Azaleas, Wintercreeper, Cherries, Plums, Strawberry, Hardy Geranium, Sea-Holly, European Mountain Ash.

5 deer-proofing tips that actually work

- **Rotate repellents.** Deer get used to one scent — switch products every few weeks, especially after rain.
- **Protect new plantings.** Even resistant plants get sampled when young and tender. Net or cage them the first season.
- **Layer aromatics.** Surround tempting plants with lavender, catmint, and sage — the strong scent masks and deters.
- **Fence what matters.** A 7–8 ft fence, or a simple fishing-line barrier at nose height, protects high-value beds.
- **Density and variety.** A dense, mixed planting is far less appealing to deer than a buffet of one favorite plant.

Remember: no plant is deer-proof

An 'A' rating means *rarely* damaged — not never. In a hard winter, a hungry herd will sample almost anything. Use this as your starting palette, protect new plants, and rotate your tactics through the season.

Find all 527 rated plants, filtered by your zone, free at clearlysolvd.com/deer-resistant-plants

Ratings adapted from Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension (E271). A guide, not a guarantee. © 2026 Clearly Solvd Inc.