

# Deer Resistant Plants List

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## General Statement on Deer Resistance

Technically, no plant is deer proof. "Deer Resistant" itself exists on a sliding scale from neighborhood to neighborhood, and deer herd to deer herd. For years Rhododendrons were highly deer resistant, and now they are readily devoured. Just this last year (2008), I have observed the deer eating: Leatherleaf Viburnum, Prague Viburnum, Koreanspice Viburnum, Dragon Lady Holly, Vernal Witchhazel, and Willowleaf Cotoneaster, all of which had previously thought of as highly deer resistant. Furthermore, I have heard of the deer taking bites (but not devouring) of Leucothoe, Juniper, Boxwood, and Blue Spruce in some of the worst areas of Kinnelon this winter.

However, while the "Deer Resistant" list is shorter than it used to be, there is an abundance of great landscape plants that still prove reliable. Also, there are many new varieties and cultivars of classic deer resistant plants (such as 'Magic Carpet' Spiraea, 'White Ball' Butterfly Bush, and 'Golden Spirit' Smokebush) that add to the list.

Also, it should be noted that deer sometimes eat plants when they are young or new to the site, but will leave them alone as the plants mature.

### Key:

(DR) – These are the plants that we would plant in the worst deer areas. At most, some of these have been nibbled (not devoured) in the winter.

(DR?) –Inconclusive deer resistance assessment at this time, and/or reports of deer resistance I have not seen enough evidence to determine one way or the other. Or, plants I often find left alone in the worst places (ex. Star Magnolia, PJM Rhododendron), but then here and there I find one devoured.

## Evergreen Trees

Norway Spruce (DR)

Serbian Spruce (DR)

Colorado Blue Spruce (DR) (Yes, I heard of deer taking bites of blue spruce...very rare.)

American Holly (DR)

Bamboo (DR)

White Pine (DR? – Supposedly not deer resistant, but I have never observed it eaten, even in bad areas.)

Cryptomeria (DR? – They do not like, but I hear they will eat.

Green Giant Arborvitae (DR? – Marketed as deer resistant, but I have heard reports it will be eaten in bad areas.)

## Shade Trees (all DR\*)

\*Assume all branches above the reach of deer.

Red Oak / Pin Oak

Red Maple / Sugar Maple

Littleleaf Linden / Silver Linden

Zelkova

Honey Locust

Pagoda Tree

Lacebark Elm

## Larger-Growing Ornamental Trees

River Birch (DR)  
Saucer Magnolia (DR)  
Callery Pear (DR? – The leaves are usually out of their reach.)  
Katsura (DR? – Yet to see it eaten, but not many samples to go by.)

## Smaller-Growing Ornamental Trees

Redbud / Forest-Pansy Redbud (DR?)  
Star Magnolia (DR?)  
Winter King Hawthorne (DR?)  
Amerlanchier (DR?)  
Fastigiated Hornbeam (DR?)  
Kousa Dogwood / Flowering Dogwood (DR?)  
Fragrant Snowbell (DR?)  
Crape Myrtle (DR?)

## Specimen Ornamental Trees

Japanese Maple (Red or Green) /Coral-bark Japanese Maple (DR)  
Weeping River Birch (DR)  
Purple-leaf Smokebush (DR?)  
'Golden Spirit' Smokebush (DR?)  
Paperbark Maple (DR?)  
Weeping Redbud (DR?)  
Weeping Katsura (DR? )  
Stewartia (DR?)  
Ginkgo (DR?)  
Sourwood (DR?)  
Dawn Redwood (DR?)  
Dragon Lady Holly (DR? – Occasionally eaten, but was a highly DR plant for a while.)

## Specimens

Dwarf Spruces (Blue and Green) (DR)  
Weeping Spruces (DR)  
Weeping River Birch (DR)  
Weeping Redbud (DR?)  
'Golden Spirit' Smokebush (DR?)  
Lace-leaf Japanese Maple (DR? – At most nibbled on in very bad areas. Never devoured.)  
Dwarf Hinoki Cypress (DR? – Will be eaten in the worst areas.)  
Harry Lauder's Walking Stick (DR?)

## Evergreen Shrubs

Boxwood (DR – a staple in deer country, but you hear tales of it being eaten. I have never seen it.)  
Shrub Juniper (DR – In the worst of worst areas (Kinnelon), they have eaten them.)  
Japanese Andromeda (DR)  
Leucothoe (DR – I have heard of them taking bites in the dead of winter...almost always left alone. )  
Gold Mop Cypress (DR? –Reported to me eaten in winter 2008-09.)  
Mahonia (DR?)  
'William Penn' Barberry (DR? Hardy enough?)  
Plum Yew (DR? Also suffers from winter dieback.)  
Cherry Laurel / Skip Laurel – I keep these on there because everyone plants them in deer country, but they will be eaten. However, they will be left alone where the deer are not the worst.

## **Semi-Evergreen Shrubs**

PJM Rhododendron (DR? – Yes I have seen it eaten, however very often if is left alone in the worst deer areas.)  
Scotch Broom (DR? – Quite DR, but have heard reports of it being eaten.)  
Bayberry (DR?)

## **Larger-Growing Deciduous Shrubs**

Doublefile Viburnum (Shasta, Mareseii, Summer Snowflake) (DR)  
Arrowwood Viburnum (DR)  
Rose of Sharon (DR)  
Butterfly Bush (DR)  
Shrub River Birch ('Little King') (DR)  
Smokebush (DR? – quite DR, but heard of it eaten once.)  
Witchazel (DR?, I know vernal witchhazel will be eaten.)  
Common Lilac (DR? – never seen eaten.)  
Shrub Willow (DR?)  
Koreanspice Viburnum (DR? - I have seen eaten.)  
Winterthur Viburnum (DR?)  
Forsythia (not DR, but deer damage often doesn't show because it is so leafy.)  
Vitex (DR? Hardy enough?)  
Calycanthus (DR?)  
Shrub Redbud (DR? Hardy enough?)

## **Smaller-Growing Deciduous Shrubs**

Spiraea (DR – a DR staple in most areas, but heard in Kinnelon of them being eaten.)  
Butterfly Bush 'White Ball' (DR)  
Russian Sage (DR)  
Caryopteris (DR – Have heard of deer taking a few bites on young plants...don't believe it just yet.)  
Itea (DR – I have planted them in the worst areas and the deer have taken a few bites, but largely stayed away.)  
Weigela (DR?)  
Dwarf Lilac (DR?)  
Fothergilla (DR?)  
Dwarf Scotch Broom (DR?)  
Winterberry Holly (DR?)  
Abelia (DR? Hardy enough?)  
Enkianthus (DR? – I have seen them left along in bad areas.)  
St. John's Wort (DR? – seems quite DR so far.)  
Daphne (DR?)

## **Ground-hugging Shrubs**

Crimson Pygmy Barberry (DR – Shy away from planting it because it is consider by some an invasive species.)  
Microbiota (evergreen) (DR – very rarely seen damage.)  
Juniper (evergreen) (DR – very rarely seen damage.)  
Yucca (evergreen) (DR)  
Carpet Rose (DR? – Some are touted to be DR such as 'Sea Foam')  
Cotoneaster (DR? – Usually left alone, but I saw some eaten in winter 2008-09)  
Heather (DR?)  
'Helleri' Holly (evergreen) (DR? – Yes it will be eaten, but then I see it left alone often in bad areas.)

## **Groundcovers**

Pachysandra (DR)  
Hakone Grass (DR)  
Blue Fescue Grass (DR)

Groundcover Sedum (DR – sometimes they will take a few bites.)  
Ajuga (DR)  
Bearberry (DR?)  
Myrtle (DR? – I have heard being eaten, but I have never seen.)

## **Ornamental Grasses (all DR)**

Fountain Grass / Hamelin Grass / Little Bunny Grass  
Karley Rose Fountain Grass  
Miscanthus  
Switch Grass  
Karl Foerster Grass  
Carex  
Acorus  
Blue Dune Grass  
Note: Liriope is not on this list. That plant will be damaged.

## **Upright Sun-Loving Perennials**

Agastache (DR)  
Willowleaf Amsonia (DR)  
Baptisia (DR)  
Turtlehead (Chelone) (DR – heard of damage once, very rare...maybe a groundhog)  
Coreopsis (DR)  
Joe-Pye Weed (Eupatorium) (DR)  
Baby's Breath (Gypsophila) (DR)  
Siberian Iris (DR – heard of damage once, very rare...maybe a groundhog)  
Liatris (DR)  
'Fireworks' Goldenrod (Solidago) (DR)  
Russian Sage (also listed in shrubs) (DR)  
Achillea (DR)  
Lavender (DR)  
Salvia (DR)  
Lamb's Ear (DR)  
Bee Balm (DR)  
Spiderwort (DR?)  
Fleece Flower (DR?)  
Veronica (DR?)  
Gaura (DR?)  
Montauk Daisy (DR?)  
Peony (DR?)  
Balloon Flower (DR? – heard of them eating.)  
Echinacea (DR? – heard of them eating)

## **Ground-Hugging Sun-Loving Perennials**

Lady's Mantle (needs ½ day of shade) (DR)  
Snow in Summer (DR)  
Perennial Dianthus (DR – heard of damaged once, very rare...maybe a groundhog)  
Candytuft (DR)  
Catmint (DR)  
Creeping Sedum (DR heard they might take a few bites...maybe a groundhog)  
Hens and Chicks (DR)  
Creeping Thyme (DR)  
Perennial Geranium (DR?)

## **Upright Shade-Loving Perennials**

Japanese Anemone (DR)

Bleeding Heart (DR)

Perennial Foxglove (DR)

Hellebores (DR)

Ligularia (DR)

Ferns: Lady, Japanese Painted, Autumn, Wood, Cinnamon, Christmas (DR – I have been told of deer eating ferns.)

Jacob's Ladder (DR?)

Cardinal Flower (DR?)

Lungwort (DR?)

Astillbe (DR? – I have heard of deer eating these, but maybe was groundhogs.)

## **Ground-Hugging Shade-Loving Perennials**

Brunnera (DR)

Lily-of-the-Valley (DR)

Sweet Woodruff (DR)

Lamium (DR)

Tiarella (DR)

Epimedium (DR)

## **Vines**

Trumpet Vine (DR? Yes, they will eat, but so aggressive it might not show.)

Clematis (DR?)

Wisteria (DR?)