

Keep mule deer out of your garden

By Jim Anderson
Correspondent

"I am NOT going to put the raspberries out until we get a fence up to keep the deer out of the garden!" So said my wife, Sue, as we discussed this summer's garden and greenhouse.

Mule deer — thanks in part to those residents who continue feeding them in their yards — are a bane to anyone trying to start or maintain a vegetable garden. Ask anyone in Sisters (in spite of the city ordinance against feeding deer) how much it costs to battle deer bent upon eating their garden and landscaping into oblivion.

The amount of forage a deer requires daily amounts to a lot of carrots, lettuce, spinach, raspberry plants or landscaping.

How do we keep deer from devouring our landscaping and kitchen gardens? Well, if you Google "Keeping deer out of your garden," you'll bring up a zillion products that the manufacturers swear by the Holy Word will work.

A sight I will never forget is that of Amanda Egertson,

Deschutes Land Trust's stewardship director, battling deer bent upon eating all the native grasses she was trying to restore in Metolius Preserve.

Time and time again, week after week, Amanda planted more grass and used this or that repellent, and each failed. She finally found one that worked and the deer left her grasses alone — but the smell from the stuff would gag a maggot.

Deer have an excellent sense of smell, so those repellents that contain predator urine and/or rotten eggs probably will work — until it rains, and it has to be applied again. There are many websites for that stuff, and depending on how and when they're applied, it may be worth checking out.

A guard dog will work, but you'll have to put up with the incessant barking. Getting up in the middle of the night to scare mule deer out of your yard every time your wife whispers, "The deer are back" works, but you'll lose a lot of sleep, and you may bump into a cougar doing so. I'd forget that one.

Pat Callender up in BC

says, "We have a 'Deer Proof' recipe in Nanaimo, British Columbia, where they (deer) come wandering through our yards and eat everything in sight! It is as follows: one egg yolk (only), one liter of water, one tablespoon baking powder. Mix well and spray on shrubs, trees, and roses every two weeks. Keep in tightly sealed container in your fridge until all used up." Another person added, "I find the eggs with tabasco sauce works also. I'll add garlic to my next batch. One gallon water, six eggs, and tabasco to taste!"

But then another person warned about unintended results from the egg and garlic goop, "The egg mixture truly works on deer, and it drives the buzzards crazy looking for road kill. They (buzzards) landed on my fence and looked for hours for their dinner."

Another frustrated gardener came up with a repellent that's free. "I get human hair from the woman who cuts my hair and put it around my plants. It keeps the deer away and it doesn't smell bad. It also seems to keep rabbits



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

Porter Liddell and Sue Anderson putting up deer-proof fencing to protect the Anderson's kitchen garden.

and raccoons away when I put it in my veggie garden."

Scare devices, such as sound-activated sprinklers are expensive and require a lot of effort to install them, but some people swear by them as the best repellent for keeping one's garden safe from mule deer. They'd also work to prevent your neighbor's dog and cat from using your backyard for a waste depository.

From my point of view, fencing is the best. But stay away from that black plastic netting that's almost impossible to see. We put that up and the birds around our

place started running into it, so we took it down immediately. Hog wire fencing with white string attached to poles at about six-inch spacing, up to about six feet works very well.

There's a website I found that provides a whole bunch of different methods for keeping deer out of your garden: www.wikihow.com/Keep-Deer-Out-of-Your-Yard. You may like one or two of those ideas.

Whatever you find that works, please, by all means, send *The Nugget* a letter to the editor and share your good news.

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