

Wildlife and Your Landscape

By Janet Green, LJM Design

Now that your garden is growing full speed ahead, you are probably thinking about how you can keep it looking great all summer. As if there aren't enough things ready to take down your labor of love; frost, drought, hail, voles, rabbits, marmots, deer, squirrels, chipmunks, and woodpeckers, you've got your hands full fertilizing, mulching and weeding. It's time to be prepared for the pillagers who are ready to feast on your living salad. Gardening in a wildlife area is probably the most frustrating for the avid gardener, yet also presents a delightful diversion when you see wild animals scamper through your yard. It's all about balance, something for you, something for them, so get ready.

There are a number of ways to prepare for a garden invasion. The best way to repel wild foragers is to plant resistant varieties that are unpalatable. Native plants provide the balance of food for deer and other garden pests, so gardening with natives can certainly be a challenge. Non-natives, such as Lavender, Thyme, and other aromatic plants are distasteful and thrive in Truckee. Fuzzy, furry leaved plants, such as Lamb's Ears are safe bets in the garden, probably too hairy for most animal's tastes. Succulents and grasses are also deer resistant and combined, make a lovely addition to your cultivated garden.

There are additives you can spray on your plants that repel animals. You can mix

up your own homemade concoction with what you probably already have on hand. Mix a quart of water, an egg, some skim milk and a little dishwashing detergent (about a teaspoon) in a spray bottle and as long as you are diligent, and it doesn't wash off in rain or sprinkler overspray, this smelly repellent works well.

Less common and reportedly less effective is *Big Game Repellent*, made from predator urine. Eric Larussen of The Villager Nursery in Truckee says that the best strategy is to try new things, "*Shake-Away* doesn't work that well, but *Liquid Fence* and *Deer-Skydd* have had the best results." These products are made from "putrefied egg solid, garlic and other smelly substances. They smell when you first apply, but then the smell dies away and only the deer with their sensitive noses can detect it."

Another bother can be woodpeckers hammering away with their beaks on your siding. Eric says that *Ropel*, a bitter substance works well when sprayed on siding where woodpeckers frequent. *Ropel* and other sprayed repellents are not effective against migrating deer because new herds continue testing out the treated foliage. It works well for returning deer who remember that your yard tastes awful.

Mechanical means work well in discouraging large garden pests. Of course a fence can be costly and not allowed in some homeowners associations, but a "Scarecrow"; a mechanical motion activated device is reportedly very effective against deer, and in some cases bears in the trash box, with far less investment. The Scarecrow's sensor goes off, it sprays water, makes noise and its movement startles the animal. It then goes quiet and re-activates as the animals move. This series of events frightens the animals enough to leave your garden in peace. Unfortunately, this will not work with chipmunks or rabbits that are too small to trigger the activation.

Had enough of terrorizing nature's best? You can also do much to attract wildlife into your garden. The best way to invite critters and birds is to provide a source of water. Whether it's a pond, stream or even a small re-circulating fountain, animals need water to survive and many will come just out of curiosity or to play.

Some plants do a better job than others to attract song birds and butterflies. Echinacea, or Cone Flower is a great medicinal plant that butterflies love and the bright pinkish-purple color attracts bees too. Apples are a favorite food for deer. Roses go a long way in attracting deer as well; they can scarcely resist the fragrance and color. It's best to keep roses up high on a deck in planters or next to the dog kennel...

As for beneficial insects and habitat, leave that old snag or fallen log. It's a perfect spot to run for cover or provide a nest for ladybugs and other small animals. With a mindful eye to fire repression, (also in this issue!) you can leave some of the grasses growing away from roads and structures, to provide habitat for many insects and animals. The natural look will attract birds, bees, butterflies, insects and small animals.

Bats can eat thousands of mosquitoes a night and are essential if you live near a drainage or low spot with standing water, where mosquitoes are a problem. Bat houses can be purchased or hand made. Simply staple a sheet of cardboard in a circular path high up, around the trunk of a pine tree, with a 1-2" gap at the bottom, and fastened tightly at the top. This will be the perfect spot for a bat refuge.

Now that you've got your arsenal of repellents or bait, go forth and garden. Luckily it's a short season and you can relax when the snow falls. Which, who knows, could be next week...

Enjoy the wildlife! 🐾

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