

L.S. PERENNIAL LANDSCAPES

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DEER & RABBIT DETERRENTS — Protecting Your Landscape

Deer and rabbits are among the most common causes of plant damage in residential landscapes. Early action and a layered approach — combining multiple deterrent methods — delivers the best long-term results. This guide covers how to identify damage, proven natural and commercial deterrent options, and plant choices that help reduce browsing.

1. IDENTIFYING THE DAMAGE

Deer Damage	Rabbit Damage
Torn, ragged edges on leaves and stems — deer lack upper front teeth and rip rather than cut. Browse line up to 6 feet high . Heart-shaped hoof prints, 2–3 inches long. Rub marks on small tree trunks and bark from antlers. Pellet droppings in scattered piles. Preferred plants: hostas, daylilies, tulips, arborvitae, azaleas, and roses.	Clean, angled cuts on stems and leaves — as if clipped with scissors. Damage occurs at ground level up to about 2 feet high . Small, round pellet droppings in clusters. Bark gnawing on young trees and shrubs at the base, especially in winter. Preferred plants: tender new growth, lettuce, beans, clover, pansies, and young shrub stems.

2. NATURAL & DIY DETERRENT METHODS

Start with these proven, low-cost methods. A combination approach works best — deer and rabbits adapt quickly to any single deterrent.

Physical Barriers & Fencing — The most reliable long-term protection. Deer fencing should be at least 7–8 feet tall. Rabbit fencing needs 1-inch mesh or smaller, at least 2–3 feet tall, with the bottom buried 6 inches into the soil to prevent digging underneath. Hardware cloth or chicken wire work well for rabbit exclusion. Individual plant cages or netting protect high-value specimens.

Homemade Garlic-Pepper Spray — A simple, effective scent and taste deterrent for both deer and rabbits.

Directions: Blend 2–3 cloves of garlic, 1 tablespoon of cayenne pepper, and 1 tablespoon of liquid dish soap in 1 gallon of water. Strain through cheesecloth and spray on foliage. Apply in early morning or evening. Reapply every 7–10 days and after rain.

Irish Spring Soap — A classic home remedy. The strong scent deters deer and rabbits from browsing nearby plants.

Directions: Cut bars of Irish Spring soap into chunks or shavings. Place in mesh bags or old socks and hang from stakes near plants at 3–5 foot intervals around garden beds. Replace every 3–4 weeks or when the scent fades. Works best in smaller garden areas.

Predator Scent Deterrents — Products containing fox urine, coyote urine, or blood meal trigger a fear response in deer and rabbits.

Directions: Apply granules or liquid around the perimeter of garden beds according to product directions. Reapply every 2–4 weeks and after heavy rain. Rotate between different predator scents to prevent habituation.

Motion-Activated Devices — Sprinklers, lights, or ultrasonic deterrents startle animals and discourage return visits. Motion-activated sprinklers are particularly effective for deer. Place at entry points to garden beds and adjust sensitivity for target animal size.

3. COMMERCIAL DETERRENT PRODUCTS

For reliable, ready-to-use protection, these commercial products are widely available and proven effective. Always read and follow label directions. Rotate products periodically — animals can become accustomed to a single scent.

- **Liquid Fence Deer & Rabbit Repellent** — Scent-based formula available as ready-to-use spray or concentrate. Creates an invisible scent barrier. Rain-resistant once dried. Apply to foliage monthly; effective year-round.
- **Bonide Repels-All Animal Repellent** — Available in granular and spray forms. Deters deer, rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks, and other wildlife. Biodegradable and safe for use around plants, people, and pets. Reapply every 2–4 weeks.

- **Bobbex Deer Repellent** — Concentrated spray using natural ingredients. Long-lasting, rain-resistant formula. Won't wash away easily. Effective through multiple seasons. Apply to foliage every 2–3 weeks.
- **Deer Out Deer Repellent** — Pleasant peppermint-scented spray, unlike many strong-smelling repellents. Natural, non-toxic ingredients. Lasts up to 3–4 months per application. Good option near patios and outdoor living areas.
- **I Must Garden Deer Repellent** — Mint-scented, natural-ingredient spray. Designed specifically for garden use. Non-offensive scent. Reapply every 3–4 weeks and after heavy rain.

4. DEER & RABBIT RESISTANT PLANTS

No plant is completely deer-proof or rabbit-proof, but these varieties are far less likely to be browsed. Consider incorporating them into your landscape as a natural defense layer.

Perennials:

- **Lavender** — Strong fragrance deters both deer and rabbits
- **Russian Sage** — Aromatic silvery foliage; extremely deer resistant
- **Catmint** — Minty scent repels browsers; blooms spring through fall
- **Bee Balm** — Loved by pollinators, avoided by deer and rabbits
- **Yarrow** — Tough, low-maintenance; deer and rabbit resistant
- **Salvia** — Aromatic foliage; wide variety of colors and sizes
- **Alliums (Ornamental Onion)** — Strong scent; deer and rabbits avoid them completely
- **Foxglove** — Naturally toxic to browsers; stunning vertical blooms

Shrubs:

- **Boxwood** — Deer and rabbit resistant; excellent for hedges and borders
- **Barberry** — Thorny stems deter browsing; colorful foliage
- **Juniper** — Aromatic evergreen; highly deer resistant
- **Spirea** — Low-maintenance flowering shrub; generally avoided by deer
- **Viburnum** — Some varieties are moderately resistant; consult before selecting

5. PREVENTION TIPS

- Use a **layered approach** — combine fencing, scent deterrents, and resistant plantings for the best protection.
- **Rotate repellent products** every few months to prevent animals from becoming accustomed.
- Apply repellents **before damage begins**, especially in early spring and late fall when food is scarce.
- Remove fallen fruit, birdseed, and other **food sources** that attract wildlife to your yard.
- Protect young trees and shrubs with **trunk wraps or wire cages** during winter when bark gnawing is worst.

Questions? Contact L.S. PERENNIAL LANDSCAPES — We're here to help protect your landscape.

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