

Living with Deer – Feeding Habits

Natural Resources

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Are deer eating your plants?

Spotting a deer in nature can be quite an exciting event, but spotting a deer eating your freshly planted garden, not so much. Plant damage caused by deer may lead to aggravation, inconvenience, and financial costs to property owners. Deer may quickly become accustomed to feeding upon gardens, ornamental plantings, groves, and nurseries in areas where human developments have replaced native habitats and reduced the availability of natural foods they prefer. These incidences of deer-human conflicts are results of the developing wildland urban interface (Resource #11 on back). While damage from deer may be reduced by fencing and the use of chemical repellents, a simpler, less expensive, and generally more effective alternative is to landscape with plants that deer do not like to eat.



Deer at UF's Ordway-Swisher property just outside of Melrose, Florida. Cervidae, ruminant mammals, Florida wildlife.

UF/IFAS Photo: Tyler Jones.



Coreopsis/Tickseed (*Coreopsis spp.*)

Coreopsis is a wildflower classified as deer-resistant with rare or minor damage from deer.

UF/IFAS Photo: Lara Miller

What deer-resistant plants can I use in my landscape?

Deer will feed on a variety of vegetation, but their diet is influenced by plant qualities such as taste and digestibility. From trees to vines and shrubs to perennials, a study revealed deer clearly have their favorites. A full list of the findings can be found through the University of Florida IFAS (UF/IFAS) Extension's Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS) publications website: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw137>. When selecting landscaping plants from the study's report, UF/IFAS recommends the planting of native species (FloridaYards.org). Note: Plants not typically chosen by deer may be consumed in areas with high populations of deer where preferred plants have already been grazed.

Additional resources can be found on the back of this page.

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#	Title	Website
1	Ornamental Plant Susceptibility to Damage by Deer in Florida	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw137
2	Coping with Deer Damage in Florida	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw128
3	Dealing with Unwanted Wildlife in an Urban Environment	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw070
4	Effects of Fire on Florida's Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw132
5	White-Tailed Deer of Florida	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw121
6	White-tailed Deer Management in Florida Part 1: Collecting Information on Herd Health	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw136
7	White-tailed Deer Management Program	http://myfwc.com/hunting/by-species/deer/
8	Deer: <i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/mammals/land/deer/
9	Strategic Plan for Deer Management in Florida 2008-2018	http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/mammals/land/deer/
10	Living with Wildlife	http://myfwc.com/conservation/you- conserve/wildlife/
11	Wildland-Urban Interface: Key Issues	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fr264
12	What to Do about Orphaned, Injured, and Sick Wildlife	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw069
13	Laws that Protect Florida's Wildlife	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw076
14	Impacts of Free-ranging Pets on Wildlife	http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw090

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