

Tips to Deter Rabbits and Deer from Your Landscape

May, 2008

Summer is practically here and it's time to spruce up our yards with annual color, get our tomatoes in the ground, and replace plants that didn't survive the Nevada winter. As we begin to plant and replenish our landscapes many of us will start to fend off wildlife which mistakenly assume that we're providing plant material just for them to graze upon.

With all the hard work and effort that goes into our landscape we want to make sure we protect our yards from nibbling rabbits and voracious deer. A first step is to take a drive around your neighborhood to get an idea of which plants grow well where you live. Then visit your neighborhood nursery or the internet for a list of trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals that deer and rabbits don't like. However, keep in mind that these animals don't read the list and when hungry enough, most animals will eat any living plant.

Another alternative for diverting rabbits and deer is the use of repellants. There are a variety of brands on the market. Each product uses a different mixture of chemicals, some natural, some not, to create an unpleasant odor to the animals. These types of repellants are usually sprayed on the plants and need to be re-applied through the season and after rain events, though there is an organic product Plantskydd which lasts several months and comes in both liquid and granular form. Many people that swear by these repellants and while others have little success.

If you have severe deer and rabbit problems you can try covering your material with netting. The thin black netting will blend into your landscape and keep animals from being able to get to the leaves and graze through your planters. Gently tuck the netting under the plants at the base and bring them up to grazing height.

If the animals are getting to your trees use some fencing around the base. A roll of metal fencing can be wrapped loosely around the base of a tree to keep the animals at bay. This is also a good way to protect your garden. The fencing can be set up to protect your vegetables and be easily accessible for their maintenance and harvest.

One of the most effective deterrents for animals in the yard is a pet. If you have a cat or dog, its scent will be present in your garden and frequently the scent alone will help keep wildlife out. Some believe that planting catnip within your landscape will also help keep rabbits out. Catnip is a favorite of cats and can attract the neighboring cats for a romp through your yard and their very presence will deter rabbits and other animals from its surroundings.

A more permanent and effective way to protect your yard from animals is to enclose it with a fence. Many of our northern Nevada homes have split rail or other permeable fences placed around their front or back yards. Installing chicken wire inside your fence 12" below the soil level and at least two feet above is a good solution. Remove any large rocks that are near the fence to prevent the rabbits from using them to jump over the fence. (They are very resourceful animals). To ensure rabbits are not getting in your yard you'll need to walk around and look for burrows and holes that may be dug by rabbits, keeping in mind that rabbits are able to squeeze through very small holes in and under a fence.

Whether you love the wildlife or can do without it, remember they are an integral part of our environment and play a positive role in our surroundings. Try following some of the simple methods suggested or ask the experts at your local nursery for advice. Most professionals can suggest deer and rabbit resistant plant material and repellants that will work for you and your home environment.