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Keeping Out the Deer by Sheila Buff



Review of *Deer-Resistant Landscaping: Proven Advice and Strategies for Outwitting Deer and 20 Other Pesky Mammals* by Neil Soderstrom. Rodale 2008, paperback, 354 pages, \$23.95

You know it's spring in the Hudson Valley when the colorful tulips that bloom so charmingly disappear overnight, nipped off like so many lollipops by the deer in your backyard. The battle to protect your garden and plantings against deer and other mammal pests, such as groundhogs, skunks, and moles, is never-ending. All solutions are partial at best, but in *Deer-Resistant Landscaping*, Wingdale resident Neil Soderstrom presents an excellent overview of successful approaches and attractive deer-resistant plants.

To minimize deer damage, a solid understanding of deer behavior is needed. Soderstrom excels in presenting a clear,

well-written discussion of deer life, including a solid explanation of how deer overpopulation and overbrowsing damages the entire ecosystem. He presents similarly thorough and engaging discussions for the animals covered in other chapters, including skunks, black bears, squirrels, chipmunks, possums, and other occasional nuisance animals. (Hudson Valley readers can skip the discussions of armadillos and javelinas.) Beautiful color photos, most taken by the author, illustrate all the animal chapters.

Soderstrom discusses the many options for deer control in depth. Removing human-provided food and salt licks, hunting, deer repellents, and frightening devices can all be effective, but Soderstrom devotes most his attention to the practical matter of fencing and other barriers.

Fencing is only half the solution. Excluding the deer will protect your vegetable garden and prized ornamentals, but planting things they don't like to eat lets you enjoy your property without feeling as if you're in Alcatraz. Part 3 of the book is devoted to an extensive illustrated discussion of deer-resistant plants. At the same time, Soderstrom makes a strong case for restricting mowing and the use of lawn chemicals, selecting native species, and maintaining as much biodiversity on your property as possible.

The final chapter of *Deer-Resistant Landscaping* contains detailed profiles of popular deer-resistant plants with all the practical information gardeners need. Will using this information on deer-resistance stop a hungry deer from knocking down your fencing and eating a supposedly deer-resistant plant? Not necessarily, but if you follow the instructions in this valuable book, the deer may just decide that getting to your lettuce is more trouble than it's worth and go eat someone else's garden instead.