



GARDENING WITH 'Mostly' CALIFORNIA NATIVES AND DEER



by "Mostly Natives"

Notes on gardening with California Natives and Deer was prepared by "Mostly Natives", a member of the CNPS Marin Chapter. "Mostly Natives" is a small nursery located in the Northwest corner of Marin County. They sell to both retail and wholesale customers and offer a wide variety of native and non-native perennials, grasses, shrubs, and trees. They can be reached at the following address "Mostly Natives", PO Box 258 27235 Highway One, Tomales, CA 94971, Tel: 1-707-878-2009, Fax 707-878-2079, Website: <http://mostlynatives.com/>

An increasing problem for many gardeners is the presence of deer. These herbivores are browsers by nature and much prefer a tender and well watered rose bush to the tough grass on the surrounding hills. There are two directions that one can go to alleviate the problem. First, one can fence them out with a tall fence or impenetrable hedge or two lower fences or hedges. Second, one can accept their presence and try to minimize the damage. If you're interested in fences there's a publication, 'A Gardeners Guide to Preventing Deer Damage' put out by the California Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife Management Division, Deer Program, which has various fencing solutions. If you want to take the second approach, read on.

The ideal solution to having a deer free back yard of course is to have a resident mountain lion but this isn't always practical. There are, however, several tricks to try. Often the deer, especially in the fall, are looking for water. Some gardeners have found that by supplying a source of water the deer will stop for a drink and then move on. There are also several sprays and powders on the market which are quite effective if regularly renewed. Fall is usually the time that deer will do the most damage in the garden as by then the surrounding hills are quite dry and offer little sustenance. If you're adding new plants at this time it's best to screen them or protect them with one of the deer sprays. Even plants that are quite deer resistant once established are seen as delicacies when coming straight from a nursery.

There is no such thing as a deer proof plant. Some deer somewhere has eaten everything that we know of including poisonous plants. There are, however, levels of deer resistance. The following list has been compiled from much experience by both us and our customers. The plants with a number 1 are the most resistant, the plants with 2 are next, etc. Experiment, that is after all one of the joys of gardening. Deer in some areas eat plants that are quite resistant in other places. And get your neighbors to garden too. The more plants that are available the less the damage to each one and the more choices everyone will have. If all else fails there's always the plastic and silk varieties that have the added benefit of not needing to be watered. Good luck!

Deer Resistant Plants 1=best, 2=next best, 3=worth trying

TREES

- Cupressus (Monterey Cypress) 1
- Pinus (Pine) 2
- Quercus agrifolia (Coast Live Oak) 2
- Sequoia (Redwood) 2

SHRUBS

- Arctostaphylos (Manzanita) 3
- Baccharis pilularis (Coyote Bush) 1
- Berberis (Barberry) 2
- Buddleia (Butterfly Bush) 2
- Carpenteria (Bush Anemone) 2
- Ceanothus Blue Jeans 1
- Ceanothus Concha 2
- Ceanothus Dark Star, Julia Phelps 2
- Ceanothus gloriosus 1
- Ceratostigma griffithii 2
- Cistus salviifolius, sunset 1
- Cistus Santa Cruz, skanbergii 2
- Cistus purpureus, iadaniifer 3
- Coleonema pluchrum 2
- Coreopsis verticillata 2
- Echium (Pride of Madeira) 1
- Fremontodendron (Fremontia) 3
- Garrya elliptica 3
- Grevillea 1
- Halimium (Dwarf Yellow Rockrose) 3
- Heteromeles arbutifolia (Toyon) 3
- Leptospermum scoparium 1
- Lupinus arboreus 1

SHRUBS -con't.

- Mimulus a. (Monkey flower) 1
- Myrica californica 2
- Nandina (Heavenly Bamboo) 2
- Rhamnus californica (Coffeeberry) 2
- Rosa californica 3
- Rosmarinus (Rosemary) 1
- Salvia clevelandii, leucantha 2
- Westringia rosmariniformis 1

ANNUALS

- Clarkia 3
- Eschscholtzia (Poppy) 3
- Nemophila menziesii (Baby Blue Eyes) 3

PERENNIALS

- Acorus (Sweet Flag) 2
- Aquilega (Columbine) 2
- Artemesia 3
- Asteriscus maritimus (Gold Coin) 2
- Coreopsis verticillata 3
- Decentra (Western Bleeding Heart) 1
- Diorama pulcherrimum 2
- Dymondia margaretae 1
- Erigeron glaucus 3
- Erigeron karvinskianus 2
- Erodium chamaedryoides 2
- Euphorbia 2
- Fuchsia thymifolia 3
- Geranium 3

PERENNIALS -con't.

- Heuchera (Alum Root) 3
- Iris douglasiana 1
- Iris hybrids 2J Juncus species 1
- Lavandula 2
- Limonium psidoclada 2
- Lithodora diffusa 2
- Muhlenbergia rigens (Deer Grass) 1
- Nepeta (Catmint) 1
- Penstemon heterophyllus 2
- Penstemon varieties 3
- Perovskia (Russian Sage) 2
- Phlox subulata 2
- Polystichum munitum 2
- Romneya coulteri (Matilija Poppy) 3
- Salvia, perennials 3
- Santolina 1
- Schizostylis 2
- Sedum spathulifolium 1
- Silene vulgaris maritima 2
- Sisyrinchium 1
- Solanum jasminoides (Potato Vine) 3
- Stachys 2
- Stipa species 1
- Teucrium 2
- Thyme 1
- Verbena bonariensis 3
- Viola adunca, labradorica 2
- Zauschneria (California Fuchsia) 1