

White-Tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)



Damage

Damage may occur at any time of year but is most severe in the late winter and early spring. Most damage is in the form of browse damage to crops and landscaping. Deer lack upper incisors and leave a ragged, broken end on browsed branches. Damage occurs from ground level up to 6 feet.

When Are They Active

Deer are active year round and at any time of the day. They are most active at dawn and dusk near the edge of woodlands.

Susceptible Plants

Deer feed on flowers, fruits, vegetables and the buds and twigs of fruit trees and ornamental shrubs. No plants are completely deer-proof if they are hungry enough. They favor plants in the rose family (service-berry, apples, other fruit trees) and many evergreens, especially cedar, yew and white pine. In the spring, damage can be extensive to emerging perennials and tulips.

Prevention/Control Methods

Barrier fencing can be installed. The larger the garden, the higher the barrier fence must be; a home garden may only require a 5-foot barrier. Plastic netting and wire cages can be used to prevent deer browsing of individual plants. Apply area repellents near plants you want to protect. Border applications may protect large areas at relatively low cost. Home remedies such as human hair in mesh bags, blood meal, feather meal, cat feces, moth-balls, and rotten eggs have been used with mixed success. Bar soap can reduce deer damage. Drill a hole in each bar and suspend with a twist tie or string. Each bar protects an area about one yard in radius. Any inexpensive brand of bar soap will work. A variety of commercially prepared repellents containing capsaicin and rotten eggs are also available.

Additional Information/Resources

- UW Extension Learning Store Controlling Deer Damage in Wisconsin [G3083](#)
- UW Extension Learning Store Plants Not Favored by Deer [A3727](#)
- Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Hotline [608-224-3721](tel:608-224-3721) (M-F, 9 am-12 noon, April 15 – October 31) or horticulture@countyofdane.com