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**Plants for Neighborhoods with Deer**

If you are in a neighborhood blessed with deer and are looking for plants they won’t eat, consider the following selections.

Texas mountain laurel is a large evergreen shrub that will grow to 15 or 16 feet tall on most sites. The foliage is attractive and it is very drought tolerant. In March, the Texas mountain laurel will make a show with their purple fragrant (grape bubblegum) blooms. Grow Texas mountain laurel in full sun.

Pomegranate is another large, blooming shrub that seems to survive in deer country. Pomegranate foliage is deciduous and not as attractive as mountain laurel foliage, but the orange flowers that appear in April and May are spectacular. Another advantage of pomegranate is the nutritious fruit that is produced. There are many different selections of pomegranate at area nurseries, so you have some discretion on how large you want the plant to be and what characteristics you prefer in the fruit. Grow pomegranate in full sun.

Unlike pomegranate and Texas mountain laurel, esperanza freezes back to the roots most winters, but like the other two deer-proof shrubs, esperanza has a very attractive bloom. The flowers are yellow and are often called Texas bells because of their distinctive shape. Esperanza will grow to 7 feet tall each summer. Grown in full sun, it will usually produce flowers from May until November if you obtain the improved selection, “Gold Star.”

There are a number of nandina selections. In size, they vary from ground cover to dwarf shrubs through the standard nandina. They are passed up by deer in most neighborhoods. If the deer nibble on them in a severe drought, it is not usually enough to kill the plants. Standard nandina grows to 7 feet tall. It does well in the sun or shade, but the more sun it has the more berries it produces and the more colorful its winter foliage. Nandina are drought tolerant, evergreen, pest and disease free.

Primrose jasmine is a weeping evergreen plant that can grow to 7 feet tall and 15 feet around. In early spring, the plants are covered with waxy yellow blooms about the size of nickels. Use primrose jasmine to cover lots of ground. Think of it as a tall groundcover.

Deer do not usually eat yaupon holly. Use the dwarf version as a superior foundation plant in sun or light shade. It grows in an attractive globe to about 4 feet tall without pruning.

Standard yaupon will grow to 25 feet tall if you let it, and it is one of the most versatile landscape plants in the arsenial if you need unusual shapes or sizes. Standard yaupon responds well to pruning and is the plant of choice for plant sculpture. Both dwarf and standard yaupon are evergreen plants. In addition to its versatility in fitting into whatever shape or space necessary, standard yaupon produces attractive berries that are eaten by songbirds after the first freeze.

Viburnums come in several shapes and sizes. In addition to being deer proof, the evergreen plant is shade tolerant. My favorite viburnum is Viburnum tinus. It grows to 12 feet tall and has attractive pink flower buds for several weeks in early spring followed by white flowers and black berries. The berries are quickly eaten by the birds. A dwarf version, spring bouquet, is just as showy and deer proof but only grows to 3 feet tall.

Other plants that are usually not eaten by deer include lantanas, salvias, yucca, iris, thyrallis, oleander, Mexican honeysuckle, Mexican oregano and rosemary.

Even with deer-proof plants, it is a good idea to spray new plantings with a repellant-like Liquid Fence once a week for two weeks. It helps reduce the natural inclination of deer to taste test and pull at anything that is newly planted.

**Garden Tasks**

Even if deer-proof plants are placed in a neighborhood with deer, protect new additions to the landscape with one of the deer repellants, such as Liquid Fence, once per week for two weeks to discourage the deer from tasting and/or pulling at newly planted plants.

Fertilize your fruit trees with one cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer per 1 inch of trunk diameter.

Aerate and top dress the lawn, but it is too early to fertilize the lawn.

Leave paperwhite and daffodil foliage to brown naturally if you want blooms next year.