

# In The Back Yard

## Digging Deep-Cynthia's Dear Deer

By Cynthia Brian

*"Gardens are the result of a collaboration between art and nature."* Penelope Hobhouse



CU Magnolia

Some of my best friends aren't human. I've been talking to animals and plants since I was an infant and never knew this was unusual. When I was happy or stressed, I'd go have a chat, both mentally and verbally, with my chickens, sheep, rabbits, horses, or my row of grape vines. Often I'd climb into the branches of my favorite oak tree to have a heart to heart. These friends listened and seemed to understand. To me our communications were completely natural, not only talking with our voices, but

with our bodies, minds, and eyes.

With the herds of deer munching their way through my carefully planted gardens I tried my conversing with these roaming critters. They usually just ignored me and continued feasting on my flowers. I was tolerant at first until they devoured plants that they supposedly don't eat-rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, fuschias, penstemon, and my prized lilies. My warm fuzzy chats with the does and stags were replaced by visions of a four pointer buck taxidermy gracing my mantel and venison on the barbecue. Of course my kinder nature won over and I developed a way to live together in harmony.

Adapting the old adage, "If you can't beat them, join

them?" to my current gardening crisis, I planted extra everything for my new deer families. For every tree, bush, or perennial I planted for our personal pleasure, I grew two for the deer's dinner delight.

Did I lick the problem? Absolutely not! I now have several generations of dear deer grazing in my orchard, front garden, and driveway. And I must admit, they have me mesmerized and enchanted as we clamor together to pick the choicest mulberries or ripe luscious apricots.. As George Elliott quips "Animals are such agreeable friends, they ask no questions and pass no criticisms" The dear deer accept me in my old ratty tatty gardening garb as we converse and I delight in their presence. My family and friends now gather at my "wildlife sanctuary" for cheer and deer!

If you don't share my love of these hoofed diners, I've put together a few tips for a potentially deer resistant landscape as well as a selection of plants that are fairly unattractive to these ravenous visitors.



society garlic

### CYNTHIA'S DEER RESISTANT GARDENING TIPS

1. Drive through your neighborhood to see what plants are thriving in established gardens. Plant similar varieties.
2. Plant extras as I do. (Not expensive if you root cuttings yourself)
3. Buy larger plants which tolerate more munching during the dry months.
4. Before planting a zillion of one variety, test a plant out by leaving one within reach of deer paths for two weeks. If it survives, they probably won't eat it.
5. Avoid foliage that attracts deer such as roses and fruit trees. Deer will find delicious plants within five miles of their grazing grounds.
6. Use more drought resistant plants in your landscape and do not over water. It will be better for your water bill and keep the deer at bay.
7. Install nightscaping lights and sprinklers with motion detectors.
8. Deer don't like to march through any highly pungent plants like mint or scented geraniums. These types of plants can provide a barrier to more tender plants, however, be cautious with all mints. They tend to take over any garden.
9. Some people sprinkle blood meal or "panther urine" on their bushes to deter the deer. My experience is that the blood meal attracts the raccoons and skunks and the urine keeps humans away!
10. If all else fails, build a fence!

### CYNTHIA'S DEER RESISTANT PLANT SELECTIONS

Trees:	Shrubs:	Annuals and Perennials:	Vines:
California Buckeye	Buddelia (Butterfly Bush)	Lambs Ear	Ivy
Acacia	Boxwood	Thyme	Jasmine
False Cypress	Bottlebrush	Begonia	Potato Vine
Eucalyptus	Pelagonium	Verbena	Honeysuckle
Magnolia	Breath of Heaven	Calla Lily	Trumpet Vine
Palms	Ceanothus	Fox Glove	
Olives	Rockrose	Society Garlic	
Spruce	Sage	Vinca	
California Bay	Lavender	Mexican Sunflower	
California Buckeye		Forget-Me-Not	

Keep in mind that nothing seems to be fool proof when it comes to deer. The drier the season, the more they'll experiment with new edibles that may have never touched before. Take the opportunity to be creative with ornamental grasses, society garlic, wallflower, thyme,

butterfly bush, bamboo, and lambs ear.. And if all else fails, do as I do...grab a glass of your favorite beverage, sit back, relax, and enjoy the show of our dear deer. Perhaps we can co-exist in the realm of nature with this approach. We are all one. Keep talking.

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Geranium



Oleander

### Cynthia's Digging Deep Garden Guide for July

*"What is paradise but a garden, an orchard of trees and herbs full of pleasure and nothing there but delights."*

William Lawson

Summer time and the living is easy! It is never vacation time in a garden and the hot dry weather demands more alertness for intruding pests. Plants are thirsty just like us and need plenty of food and water. Lawns require mowing at least once a week as we tumble and play croquet! If you are planning to go away, give your garden a quick once over before you leave...weed, mulch with 3 inches of inert materials, cut off all blooms, pick vegetables, and water thoroughly...surprise, you will return to beautiful new blooms and a great meal of fresh vegetables!

- WATER is the most important ingredient in July. Check sprinkler systems for efficiency and timing. Keep that compost pile damp, too!
- CUT back petunias and summer annuals for a second grand August display.
- TIE up vines and stake tall delphiniums.
- SHARPEN lawn mower blades as you need to mow at least once a week.
- PICK your fruit from fruit trees. Never let it sit on the ground or brown rot fungus will spread to ripening fruit.
- CONTROL insects in your vegetable garden by picking them out by hand or using nontoxic insecticides such as dishwashing detergent.
- BULBS...if you like to pull out your bulbs and store for next year, this is the season to do it. Discard small or rotten tubers and bulbs and place the good ones in a cool, dark place.
- MULCHING is more important than ever to keep moisture in, roots cool and weeds out.
- CUTTINGS of perennials such as verbena, dianthus, daisies, and geraniums will grow successfully.
- FERTILIZE the vegetables and summer flowering annuals with applications of nitrogen. Container plants need more frequent fertilizing as the food leaches out with watering.
- SIT back and enjoy your summer garden...you've earned it!

HAPPY GARDENING TO YOU!

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