

Landscaping techniques prevent plants from becoming a wildlife buffet



In rural Wyoming, or on the fringes of communities, wildlife may munch on landscape plants.

Two methods are available to reduce wildlife damage. The first is selecting plants that are deer, antelope, rabbit, and ground squirrel resistant. See the list of suggested plants.

Second, if less-resistant plants are selected, gardeners can use various physical or chemical methods to keep critters away from plant stems. The trunks of trees or the stems of shrubs are the most susceptible to animal damage. If a woody plant stem is girdled – damaged all the way around the stem – it will eventually die because it cannot get water from the roots up the tree or store energy from the leaves down to the roots.

Chicken wire or “hardware cloth,” a fine wire mesh guard, can be placed around young stems until thick bark develops. For very small plants, a layer of aluminum foil around stems at ground level and up 8 to 12 inches high on the plant should do the trick, but be careful heat does not build up between the foil and the trunk. The heat can be as damaging as the critters.

Larger barriers such as netting or fences around the garden can prevent plants from being perennial targets for critters. Fencing to keep deer and antelope out must be at least 7 to 8 feet high. It has also been suggested the fence be placed at a 30-degree angle outward. Electric fencing can be used successfully if there are no concerns of children or pets getting shocked.

A fence for smaller wildlife, such as rabbits or ground squirrels, should be buried at least 6 inches

below the soil surface with a section below ground directed outward from the garden.

Repellents are relatively successful but must be reapplied if rain or snow falls; however, the reason these keep the critters away is because the scent is offensive to them – it can also be offensive to humans.

Selecting plants wildlife are less likely to want to eat is probably the best solution. As with any animal, our native wildlife have favorites they prefer. These are often seen chewed down to the ground in a garden. Sometimes, gardeners will have a grouping of plants where one species or variety is chewed down and the next plant is not touched.

These plants are suited to a variety of microclimates, vary in sun or shade needs, need a variety of levels of moisture, and have many different soil preferences. Select plants suited for a particular site. For further assistance, contact a nursery professional or a local University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) office. An on-line listing of county CES offices is available at <http://www.uwyo.edu/UWces/Counties.asp>.



Donna Cuin is a horticulture program associate for the Natrona County University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service office. She can be reached at (307) 235-9400 or dcuin@natronacounty-wy.gov.



Suggested plants

Ground Covers

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Ajuga reptans</i> | Bugleweed |
| <i>Galium odoratum</i> | Sweet woodruff |
| <i>Vinca major</i> | Vinca vine |
| <i>Vinca minor</i> | Periwinkle |
| <i>Veronica spp.</i> | Speedwell |
| <i>Thymus spp.</i> | Thyme |

Flowering Perennials

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|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Rudbeckia spp.</i> | Black-eyed Susan |
| <i>Nepeta spp.</i> | Catmint |
| <i>Echinacea spp.</i> | Coneflower |
| <i>Coreopsis spp.</i> | Coreopsis (tickseed) |
| <i>Heuchera spp.</i> | Coralbells |
| <i>Iris spp.</i> | Iris |
| <i>Narcissus</i> | Daffodils |
| <i>Lamium spp.</i> | Dead nettle |
| <i>Digitalis spp.</i> | Foxglove |
| <i>Liatris spp.</i> | Gayfeather |
| <i>Stachys byzantina</i> | Lamb's ear |
| <i>Convallaria majalis</i> | Lily of the valley |
| <i>Pulmonaria spp.</i> | Lungwort |
| <i>Mentha spp.</i> | Mint |

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|--------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Allium spp.</i> | Onion family |
| <i>Salvia spp.</i> | Sage |
| <i>Cytisus scoparius</i> | Scotch broom |
| <i>Spartium junceum</i> | Spanish broom |
| <i>Achillea spp.</i> | Yarrow |

Shrubs

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|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Cotoneaster spp.</i> | Cotoneaster |
| <i>Forsythia spp.</i> | Forsythia |
| <i>Lonicera japonica</i> | Japanese honeysuckle |
| <i>Buddleia spp.</i> | Butterfly bush |
| <i>Amorpha canescens</i> | Leadplant |
| <i>Ribes spp.</i> | Gooseberry |
| <i>Syringa spp.</i> | Lilac |
| <i>Viburnum spp.</i> | Viburnum |
| <i>Rosa rugosa</i> | Rugosa rose |
| <i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i> | Russian sage |
| <i>Spiraea spp.</i> | Spiraea |
| <i>Taxus spp.</i> | Yew |

Trees

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|-------------------|--------|
| <i>Pinus spp.</i> | Pine |
| <i>Picea spp.</i> | Spruce |