



Deer damage to trees

Deer damage to farmstead tree and shrub plantings can be the number one problem during establishment. Damage may not be as severe during the summer months since there is much more food available at this time of year. Late fall and through the winter months deer have to broaden their search for food. This is when they usually end up in your yard looking for those small shrubs and trees.

There are some things that can be done to reduce the severity of deer damage. Selecting the method depends on the level of effectiveness and expense.

Exclusion methods

Exclusion methods include the construction of **fences**. There are several designs available for woven wire and electric fences. Electric fences are easy to construct, do not require rigid corners and materials are readily available. However on large tree plantings the cost will increase considerably and maintenance will take more time. Woven wire fences have shown a lower maintenance requirement, but the cost is much more. The effectiveness of the fence will decrease during winter months if there is heavy snowfalls. Snow can become hard and allow deer to walk or jump over tall fences. This can happen regardless of the type of fence you install.

Individual **tree protectors** are another exclusion method that can be used. There are many manufactures of tree protectors. They basically are available in round tubes or flat sheets that can be formed into a tube when placed around the tree. The protectors are placed over the tree so the tree is encased in the tube after installation. Each tube is then anchored with a stake so the tube will not move. This reduces potential damage to the tree. The tree protector allows the tree to grow inside the tube and will not be susceptible to deer browsing or antler rubbing. Tree protectors are available in various heights. They are commonly sold in 2 foot and 4 foot heights. They typically last 5 to 7 years before they breakdown from the sunlight. This usually allows enough time for the tree to be at a height deer cannot readily browse branches or new shoots. Cost for the tree protectors vary, but can be a viable option on smaller planting.

Repellants

The second method involves repellent products. Repellants come in two modes of action. **Area** repellents are applied near trees and repel by odor alone. They are usually less effective. **Contact** repellents are the second mode. Contact repellents are applied directly to the tree and repel by taste. They are most effective when applied to trees during late fall or winter months. Apply contact repellents on a dry day when temperatures are above freezing. On young trees, contact repellents should be sprayed on the entire tree. On older trees, treatment should be 6 feet above the expected maximum snow depth. If you have deer problems during the summer months, repellent rates are about half the concentrations used in the winter.

Most contact repellents are not labeled for human consumption. Use cautions on edible fruit if you plan to consume them and read the label on the repellent container, there are products available for human consumption.

Repellent effectiveness depends on several factors. Reapplication may be needed after each rainfall. Water will weaken the repellents concentration level. Some repellents do not weather well even in the absence of rainfall. They must be applied on a regular basis to be effective. Also when weather circumstances are more severe and makes food sources harder to find, deer are likely to ignore the repellents.

Lure Crops

Lure crops have been planted to attract deer away from trees and shrubs. This method can work if conditions are right. The lure crop should be located some distance away from the protected area. Lure crops that are located adjacent to the tree and shrub planting will not be effective. They are also less effective under heavy snow conditions. A good lure crop for this area may be a planting of *Small Burnet*. This perennial forb is hardy and long-lived. *Small Burnet* is noted for its excellent wildlife forage value during all seasons. It also stays green throughout the growing season and into the winter until heavy snow cover occurs. A seeding rate of 20 pound per acre can be used to establish a lure crop planting.

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Plants deer dislike eating

And finally the last method that may be worth exploring is planting trees and shrubs deer generally dislike to eat. But when deer are hungry enough due to lack of other food sources, they will readily forage on tree and shrubs they normal don't prefer. Listed below are trees and shrubs that may be planted in this area that deer may not damage as severely as some others.

SHRUBS

Caragana (Siberian Pea tree)
Common Lilac
Buffaloberry
Honeysuckle
Potentilla
Golden Current

Red Osier Dogwood
Raspberries
Hawthorn
Nanking Cherry
Woods Rose



TREES

Honey Locust
Colorado Blue Spruce
Rocky Mountain Juniper
Scotts Pine
Mugo Pine

These four methods of reducing deer damage to tree and shrub plantings can be used separately or in some combination.

That's Shady.
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