

# Oh my deer...

By Nancy Bremner

## that tastes awful (Or Get Out Of My Garden)

You can bet your bottom dollar your vegetables will never be safe from four legged critters when you are in Cottage Country. Carrots and beets are pulled by their roots and savoured by sloe-eyed beasts called *Odocoileus virginianus* or White-tailed deer while your friends from town coo at the beauty of the beast. Poisonous leaves of potatoes, tomatoes and rhubarb are nonchalantly and indiscriminately pulled and digested by bold marauders. What can you do?

One of the simplest solutions is to fence in your vegetable garden. Raised beds are easily fenced or larger areas can be fenced electrically. All right I know that wasn't fair. But don't give up hope because what I really wanted to tell you was that you could still have beautiful flowerbeds and borders. Yes, that's right, lots of flowers without the trouble of a vegetable garden.

I have become so accustomed to many deer in the yard and I naturally assume that most people are having the same sort of experience. I live in Pinawa, along the beautiful historic Winnipeg River, where the deer have been feed for about thirty years and have discovered the epicurean delight of town gardens. Through the years the more commonly thought deer proof plants are now ordinary fodder.


My husband and I don't care to have a fence because we have boreal mixed woods around our yard and the view from the back belies the fact that we live in a town. So we live with the deer, bears, skunks, racoons, foxes and the occasional wolf or coyote.

I quickly became resigned to the fact that my more favourite flowers such as Asiatic lilies or shrub roses were going to be a thing of the past unless we decided to spend a fortune on a "good neighbour" fence. Eight feet high, solid wood without a glimpse of the beauty of the forest behind us is not an alternative. I've taken up the challenge and have discovered at least seventy plants that will withstand a visit from our hungry four legged friends.

### Some of the plants you may want to use to create your deer proof cottage flower garden

**Above:** Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) attracts hummingbirds but is not immune to an occassional nibble by an inexperienced fawn.

- Iris (Iridaceae)
- Pink family (*Dianthus caryophyllacae deltoides*)
- Goutweed or Bishop's weed (*Aegopodium podagraria "variegatum"*)
- "Burgundy Glow" (bugleweed *Ajuga reptana*)
- Silver Mound (*Artemisia schmidtrana*)
- "Lambrook Silver" wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)
- Beach wormwood (*Artemisia stelleranna*)
- Lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantians*)
- Peony (*Paeonia*)
- Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare var. crispum*)
- Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)
- Yarrow all kinds (*Achillea*)
- Cushion spurge (*Euphorbia epithymoides*)
- Primrose (*Oenothera*)
- Daylily (*Hemerocallis*)
- English Primrose (*Primula*)
- Yellow Corydalis (*Corydalis lutea*)
- Marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*)
- Golden Marguerite (*Anthemis tinctoria*)
- Pyrethrum (*Chrysanthemum coccineum*)
- Blanketflower (*Gaillardia grandiflora*)
- Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*)
- Icelandic poppy (*Papaver nudicaule*)
- Oriental poppy (*Papayer orientale*)
- All annual poppies (*Papayer*)
- Rose Campion (*Lychnis coronaria*)
- Stonecrop (*Sedum*)
- Pussy toes (*Antennaria dioica*)
- Showy Pussy toes (*Antennaria pulcherimma*)
- Tatarian Statice (*Goniolimon tataricum*)
- Meadowrue (*Thalictrum rochebrunianum*)
- Sea or common thrift (*Armeria maritima*)
- Northern bedstraw (*Galium boreale*)
- Astilbe (*Astilbe tacquetii superba*)



A collage of flowers that will ensure blooms from summer to frost. Blanketflower, Golden Marguerite and Pastels or Colorado Mixture Yarrow.

The secret is around you so you must observe. Start with the wild plants first. Most of us are gardening in clay or on Precambrian Shield or perhaps glacial till such as the Beaches area in Manitoba. Each of these plant communities has plants that are suited to grow and thrive in the varying habitats. It is often easy to gather seeds and sow them in the fall in a well-marked area for late spring transplanting. More plant nurseries carry native plant seeds and plant plugs to get your natural garden growing.

Please remember that it is against the law to dig and remove, even if it is to your cottage, any plants in our Provincial Parks. Also

consider the natural spread of the plant because otherwise you could be responsible for introducing an exotic plant into our native habitats such as purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). Many of our common weeds are plants from Europe brought over for the herbal garden such as the well-known dandelion, common plantain and yarrow.

Strong flavoured flowers such as marigolds, except the four petal varieties, are not safe in a densely populated deer area. Perennial and annual poppies add bright colours to your garden, while snow in summer, maiden pinks, catmint,

Culver's root (*Veronica virginica*)  
Speedwell (*Veronica spicata*)  
Coneflower (*Echinacea*)  
Catmint (*Nepeta mussinii*)  
Mrs. Moon, Bethlehem Sage (*Pulmonaria*)  
Sea Holly (*Eryngium planum*)  
Lavender (*Lavandula*)  
Common Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*)  
Three-toothed cinquefoil (*Potentilla tridentata*)  
Snow-in-summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*)  
Oxeye Daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*)  
Shasta Daisy (*Chrysanthemum superbum*)  
Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majales*)  
Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*)  
Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra*)  
Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*)  
Giant Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)  
Harebells (*Campunula rotundifolia*)  
Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*)  
Russian Sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)  
Mother-of-thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*)  
Philadelphia fleabane (*Erigeron philadelphicus*)  
Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)  
White prairie clover (*Petalostemon candidum*)  
Purple prairie clover (*Petalostemon purpureum*)  
Daffodils (*Daffodils*)

goutweed or bishop's weed and pulmonaria add foliage and flower colour all summer long. Nasturtiums are one of the easiest and safest annuals to grow, as the deer don't like them. Spice up your salad with the leaves or fill the flowers with a sweetened cream cheese spread. You can also plant

**Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)**  
**Nasturtium (*Nasturtium*)**  
**Everlasting (*Helichrysum*)**  
**Alyssum**  
**Marigold gem series (*Tagetes signata*)**

### Wild and ornamental grasses

**Hair grass (*Agrostis scabra*)**  
**Sweet grass (*Hierochloa odorata*)**  
**Common blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*)**  
**June grass (*Koeleria cristata*)**  
**Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)**  
**Blue grama grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*)**  
**Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardi*)**  
**Moor grass (*Molina caerulea variegata*)**  
**Blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*)**  
**Blue Fescue (*Festuca glauca*)**

### Occasionally nibbled plants

**Gay feather (*Liatris spicata*)**  
**Perennial flax (*Linum perenne*)**  
**Joe Pye Weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*)**  
**Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra*)**  
**Common columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)**  
**Maltese Cross (*Lychnis chalcedonia*)**  
**Pansy (*Viola*)**

nasturtiums around your vegetables as aphid traps.

If you are into a unique look try gardening with perennial grasses. They are very lovely as a backdrop if they are of the large variety while the shorter varieties can be used in your border.



All poppies, annual and perennial, are deer-proof. This Black Poppy is an annual which will self-sow throughout the garden.

While deer make gardening a challenge, I view each summer as a chance to try a new variety of interesting perennials and annuals. Landscaping becomes a new opportunity to try unique combinations of colours and shapes. Each

of us can make our habitat uniquely ours by rising to these naturally born challenges.

Most of the plants that are provided in my list are deer proof, occasionally there are a few "oops" this usually happens when an inexperienced fawn tries out a plant or two. Try making a Cajun Delight, a water spray

mixed with garlic juice and lots of cayenne or Tabasco sauce. Spray your nipped plants and don't forget to spray after a rain.

Now that you have a solid base of plants go forth with head held high and a trowel in your fist, rise up and declare, "I will prevail!"

Happy Gardening. ☀

If your cottage garden or the garden of someone you know is the envy of all the neighbours let The Cottager know. It can be a flower, vegetable, rock garden or any combination. Submit a photo if possible along with a contact name and number. The Cottager will visit a few gardens throughout the growing season in preparation for developing future article(s).