

Deer and rabbit control

We are now completing rifle deer season for 2011. There are many different times throughout the fall and winter that people can deer hunt depending on the type of weapon they are using, bow and arrow is throughout the fall and muzzleloader is in early winter. Regular rifle season for deer in Nebraska ran from November 12-November 20, 2011. This is a time when many people, myself included, go out to hunt for deer. They do this, not only as a sport, but also as a way to get meat in the freezer for the upcoming year and to reduce the population of deer that eat our crops, damage our landscapes, and cause many car accidents each year.

Deer can really be a nuisance to plants in all seasons of the year. I get a lot of calls from people who want to know what the silver bullet is to reduce the amount of damage that deer do to our vegetable gardens and trees and shrubs each year. The sad truth is that there is no real cure for deer damage to our plants. We need to either choose plants that are rarely damaged by deer or we need to somehow exclude deer from our plants in general.

The best way to protect your plants from deer damage is to exclude deer from the plants. This is sometimes a difficult task, but it can be done, in smaller areas, like around an acreage. There are fences that can be utilized but they need to be at least 8 foot tall, snow fence can work for this. Another type of fence that has proven quite effective is an electric fence that has small squares of aluminum foil coated with peanut butter, placed sporadically on the fence. This technique is used to eventually train the deer to stay away from the fence, even if the electricity is not turned on. This electric fence technique should not be used in an area where a child or a pet can get to the fence so that they do not get electrocuted.

The other way that can add a little bit of help in controlling the deer population around your home or acreage is to plant plants that are rarely damaged or seldom severely damaged by deer. Types of plants that you can plant that are rarely damaged by deer are things like barberry, paper birch, holly, blue spruce, boxwood and many more. Plants that are seldom severely damaged by deer include bittersweet, dogwoods, hawthorn, beech, forsythia, honey locust, junipers, lilac, Norway spruce, mugo pine, and many more. If you want to know about a particular plant, and how much damage deer typically cause them, you can call me and I will let you know.

Rabbits can also be quite a problem in areas where deer are a problem. Rabbits can be excluded by a low fence around a garden or landscape area. Cylinders can be placed around young trees to reduce damage during the winter. Habitat modification is another good way to control rabbits, remove brush piles, debris, and other cover that rabbits prefer to live in during the winter.

If you live on an acreage and enjoy this article, you may be interested in more articles about wildlife, insects, plants, animals, and much more. Check out the acreage website at acreage.unl.edu. On this website, you will find web videos, articles, monthly features, and a link to the monthly newsletter. The web content changes every month and you can sign up to be on the listserv for the monthly newsletter.

Nicole Stoner, Extension Educator

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Gage County • 1115 West Scott Street, Beatrice NE 68310

P: 402-223-1384 • fax: 402-223-1370 • email: nstoner2@unl.edu • website: gage.unl.edu

facebook : <http://www.facebook.com/NicoleStonerHorticulture> • twitter @Nikki_Stoner