Beautiful and Safe Bay Area Gardens

Creating Deer-Resistant Lawns and Gardens
Felidae Conservation Fund is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that aims to advance the conservation of wild cats and their habitats planetwide through a combination of groundbreaking research, compelling education and cutting-edge technology.

The Bay Area Puma Project (BAPP) is a pioneering research study and education initiative in the San Francisco Bay Area that seeks to shed light on critical conservation challenges facing the puma, or mountain lion, and works to engage the public through creative tools and interactive education.

For more information please visit www.felidaefund.org and www.bapp.org
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Written and compiled in 2011 by the Felidae Conservation Fund and the Bay Area Puma Project
Introduction

As human development increases and wilderness areas decrease, wildlife (including deer) must search for additional sources of sustenance, which often tempts them into towns where there tends to be an ample supply of nourishment.

While cute, a hungry deer can create extensive damage to urban areas in a short period of time. One adult deer eats between six and ten pounds of vegetation a day. Deer can strip gardens, decimate bushes, trample flowers, and destroy vegetable plots.

In addition to the physical damage to gardens, deer are key attractants for mountain lions—bringing them out of their preferred reclusive existence and into urban areas. Like any smart hunter, pumas follow their prey. As deer and other wildlife are attracted to our gardens, mountain lions are attracted to the deer. However, with some strategic landscaping tips, you can deter deer and mountain lions, while creating a safe garden that is also visually appealing and enjoyable.

This booklet will provide you with some tips and guidance to achieve a beautiful deer-resistant garden.
Why Protect the Puma?

The puma, also called mountain lion, cougar, or panther was once the most widely distributed land mammal in the Western Hemisphere. By 1900, Pumas were extirpated from the Eastern United States. In the West, we are fortunate to still have the presence of these majestic and elusive major predators, as they are important to the health of our overall ecosystem.

As top predators, mountain lions keep the ecosystem in control, as without pumas, deer populations could proliferate dramatically. More deer means more pressure on the landscape (due to overgrazing), more disease such as Lyme disease, and more deer in our gardens. In sum, mountain lions are vital in maintaining environmental balance.

While maintaining mountain lions is critical, equally important is limiting puma-human encounters and managing our gardens to deter deer, and in turn mountain lions, is a key component in co-existing in harmony with wildlife.

The equation is simple:

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\text{Deer-Attractant Gardens} = \text{Deer} = \text{Pumas}
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Alternatively:

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\text{Strategic Deer-Resistant Gardening} = \text{No Deer} = \text{No Pumas}
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Ten Tips For Making Your Garden Less Inviting to Deer

1. Choose Smart Plants. The first step is to get rid of any plants in your yard that deer like to eat, and replace them with plants they find unpalatable. A deer-resistant garden does not have to be as visually bland as one might think. With a bit of research and careful planning, a garden can be well-designed, colorful AND deer-resistant, and in many cases even more beautiful and enjoyable for humans.

For example, if you want to plant bulbs, choose daffodils, which are not as appealing to deer, rather than tulips. If you like roses, choose a rugosa hybrid. The overwhelming scent, leathery leaves, and thorns make them unlikely deer food. For more information on deer-resistant plant choices: Refer to the categories below, check out the following link, or consult your local nursery. www.yerbabuenanursery.com/DEER1a.php

Trees & Evergreens
Deer seem not to be that interested in several good-looking tree species that are commonly found in Northern California. Options include Cedars, Eucalyptus, Magnolias, and Sequoias. As a general rule, deer tend to dislike like most evergreens species and they give a wide berth to Pine, Fir, Spruce and Cypresses trees. Deer also avoid broadleaf evergreen species, including Hollies, Myrtles, Laurels and Madronas.

Shrubs
Gardeners seeking to fend off deer have a wide range of choice with shrubbery. Several shrubs are poisonous to deer, such as Rhododendron, Daphne, Mountain Laurel and American Bittersweet. Several flowering shrubs aren’t toxic, but are generally sidestepped by deer in favor of better-tasting fare. These include Elderberry, Gooseberry, Huckleberry, Jasmine, Lilac, Nightshade, Oregon Grape, Sage and Wild California Rose.
Perennials
Several perennial flower options are deer-resistant. Some of the best options include Buckwheat, Delphinium, Iris, Fuchsia, Milkweed, Monkeyflower, Wormwood and Yarrow. Deer also avoid Foxglove, Night-blooming Jasmine, Larkspur, Lupine, Daffodils, and even some Tulips because they are toxic. Good container plants that resist deer include Asters, Geraniums, and Marigolds. Deer also generally stay away from kitchen garden herbs, including Rosemary, Thyme, Lavender, Oregano and Sage.

Ornamental Grasses
Deer usually shun a number of striking ornamental grasses that are well-suited to Northern California landscapes. The list includes Fountain Grasses, Fescues, and Bamboo. Other deer-resistant options include Japanese Sedges, Vanilla Grass, Melics, Needle Grasses, and Tufted Hair Grass.

2. Ask Your Neighbors. Deer populations vary in their tastes according to geographic area. In general, they tend to dislike plants which are thorny, poisonous, sticky, or with cottony leaves. Try using native plants which have proven successful for your neighbors. Chances are, the local deer have similar preferences for certain plants. Note: Deer taste buds vary geographically and seasonally.

3. Determine the Deer’s Main Entryway. Deer are creatures of habit. Find the path that they have been using when entering your landscape and make sure it is unappealing by positioning deterring plants in this entryway and/or use a repellant spray in this area.

4. Build a Fence. Although deer can jump, fences provide an obstacle and deterrent as usually deer will not go where they cannot see past or see over. The initial cost may be higher, but the results are long lasting and a good investment. Fencing should be taut, secure and checked regularly.
5. Use Borders and Plant Strategically. Another strategy is to border the entryways and edges of your garden with deer-repellent plants as planting a deer-resistant group of plants in front of non-deer-resistant plants can sometimes dissuade deer. Also hide smaller susceptible plants under larger deer-resistant trees and shrubs.

6. Protect Young Plants. Young, tender plants taste better to deer than older, established plants. As young plants cannot afford to sacrifice too many leaves, protect these plants with a physical barrier and/or spray until they are established. Young plants can be individually caged, using a solid metal stake that the deer cannot push down.

7. Keep It Clean. During harvest season, fruit trees and vegetable patches are alluring to deer. If fruit, nuts, or unharvested vegetables are left on the ground, deer will find it hard to resist entering.

8. Keep Tall Grass Trimmed. Mow and trim grasses and lawns. If there is tall grass, deer are encouraged to make beds and get cozy.

9. Use Additional Tools for Key Seasons. Early in the spring, nature provides more deer food. However, the mothers get hungrier during birthing season. Furthermore, Summer into Fall means less food and a need to get water by chewing on plants and heading into town where there may be more potential green foods. This is the time for using additional tactics, such as deer-repellent sprays. Repellants are chemicals or other substances that are meant to dissuade deer due to their rancid odor or bad taste.

For natural deer-repellant spray recipes that you can make at home.

Other commercial sprays exist as well.
10. Train the Deer with Mechanical Devices. In areas where you need even more support, consider mechanical deterrents. One such scare device is The Guardener™, which uses a combination of an ultrasonic alarm and pressurized water jet to deter deer. In addition, it is solar powered so there is no need for electricity or batteries. Additional options include the Wireless Deer Fence™ or the Havahart® Electronic Repellent for Deer which can be placed inconspicuously around the landscape to train deer not to enter.

See - www.deer-departed.com/mechanical-deer-deterrents.html - for more details. Note: Scare devices are most effective when used in conjunction with repellants.

Additional Tips to Deter Mountain Lions and Deer

- Clear vegetation from around your house where mountain lions can take cover and hide. Mountain lions prefer to hunt where escape cover is close by.

- Do not leave pet food outside; Leftover or spilled food (and even the odors from an empty bowl) may attract raccoons and other mountain lion prey.

- Do not feed wildlife. Feeding deer, raccoons, or other wildlife in or near your yard may inadvertently attract mountain lions.

- Use outdoor lighting
  - Keep the perimeter of your house well-lit at night.
  - Consider installing motion-triggered lighting near the perimeter of your yard to illuminate local areas where animals approach. Such lights may deter both mountain lions and their prey from lingering near your yard.

- Protect pets
  - Most family pets (even large dogs) are easy prey for mountain lions and other predators, such as coyotes. Pets left outside may attract mountain lions, and other predators, to your house.
  - Either bring pets inside (especially at night) or keep them in a sturdy kennel with a secure top when they are unsupervised.
Additional Resources

Yerba Buena Nursery:
www.yerbabuenanursery.com

Bay Area Deer-Resistant Landscaper:
www.blueplanetgardening.com

Natural Deer-Repellant Spray Recipes:
www.deer-departed.com/deer-repellent-recipes

Commercial Sprays:
www.deer-departed.com/taste-repellent.html

Mechanical Detersants:
www.deer-departed.com/mechanical-deer-deterrents.html
www.scatmat.com
www.wirelessdeerfence.com
www.Guardeners.com

Other websites:
www.eastbaygarden.com/pests.htm
www.deer-resistant-plants.com

Books: