

**Brian Maddy, County Extension Agent**

### **Keeping Bambi Out of the Yard**

Several years ago my wife became enamored about raising hostas. She selected many different cultivars and we made three beds for them. We soon discovered that hostas were to deer were like ice cream to humans. We tried various solutions to repelling them. We tried hanging bars of soap, bags of human hair and dog hair with little effect. Since then, our hosta collection has shrunk to just a few survivors.

We also discovered how quickly buck deer can damage small trees during the rut season. They actually girdled one tree in one night before action could be taken. Some folks believe that Troup County is blessed with a large deer population. Others would disagree. The big question is how we keep deer out of our yards.

In order to keep deer out, we need to know why they like to frequent our yards. Deer love to feast on nutrition rich plants. Since most homeowners fertilize their yards, this provides a tastier proposition than the nearby woods. The newest growth also tends to be the most nutritious as well. That's why you may see the ends clipped off at the same height throughout a planting. This is called the browse layer. Be sure to identify that the damage is indeed deer feeding on your plants.

Now that you know that they are feeding on your landscape, how do you keep them out? One method of control is called the **HERL** model. The **HERL** method includes a step-by-step approach to limiting damage. **H** stands for habitat modification or harassment; **E** stands for exclusion, including fencing; **R** is for repellent or removal; and **L** for lethal control.

Habitat modification may be the least evasive method. Planting landscape material that deer do not like to eat is the first step. We have a long list of plant material that's available at the extension office or online that will help the homeowner make selections. They call this material "deer-tolerant ornamental plants."

Protecting your plantings by exclusion is the next step. This works well with gardens. Erecting an electric fence around the vegetable garden is very effective repelling deer. Some folks put peanut butter on the fence to train the deer about electricity. Tying white rags to the wire also alerts the deer to where the fence is located since deer like to feed at dawn and dusk. This prevents them from getting tangled up. Placing a twelve foot woven wire fence may not be economically feasible for most homeowners but you will see them around test

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plots at UGA and Fort Valley State University. Placing staked, chicken wire fences around young trees will effectively prevent damage during the rutting season.

Using repellents is another option. Most home remedies as mentioned above have been found mostly ineffective. Using any product containing rotten or putrescent eggs should never be used around gardens or any food item destined for human consumption. Mothballs are illegal to use outdoors. Repellants containing oils like garlic and mint can be used with some success. Spray on repellents work only until the next rain. Some have to be applied weekly. One product that has been found to temporarily repel white-tailed deer in food plots is specially treated sewage sludge. It is not labeled as a deer repellent but is sold as a fertilizer in many home improvement and garden centers.

Before using any lethal means, first contact the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for guidance.

One of the most important considerations when trying to keep deer out of the landscape is to start the repellent program as soon as damage is noticed. Never wait. The deer will form the habit of feeding on your property. You also must be persistent. You have to keep the fence electrified, spray the repellants on the correct schedule and keep the barriers up and in good condition. Evaluate your program to determine which works best with your lifestyle.

One final consideration is that deer feeding is affected by how abundant forage may be. In droughty years, deer will be more desperate to feed on your irrigated landscape plants that have been fertilized well. Always read and follow the label on any deer repellants and products.

### **Enhancing the Safety of Locally Grown Produce Class**

This class will provide a UGA certificate of training for those vegetable growers who wish to receive food safety training. Enhancing the safety of locally grown produce on the farm, using land and water resources safely, using manure safely, providing worker hygiene safety, providing toilet and handwashing facilities, harvest, storing and transporting food safely. Helen Carter and Brian Maddy of the UGA Extension service will be the speakers. No cost. March 23 from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM at the Ag Center, Call to Register

### **Master Naturalist Extension Volunteer Course**

Troup County Extension in conjunction with the Warnell School of Forestry at UGA will be offering the Georgia Master Naturalist Program from March 31 to June 5th. Ten classes are planned The MNEV class will explore the many facets of Georgia's ecosystem. Some of the topics will include:

- Native plants and tree identification
- Water ecosystems and how it relates to West Point Lake and the Chattahoochee
- River

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- Mammal, bird, and insect identification and the natural history of Georgia.
- Forest, water and wildlife interaction.

Many field trips and hands-on activities are planned. Cost: \$175.00 Call to Register.

### What's going on in Extension?

- **Become a Master Naturalist:** The program begins March 31<sup>st</sup>. It will run through June 6<sup>th</sup>. Cost of the program is \$175.00. Call the office for more information and the registration packet.
- **Thursday, March 24, Small Ruminant Class:** reproduction, lambing, marketing, hoof trimming. Call Susan James, Meriwether County Extension, 706.672.4235 for registration information.
- **March 15: TCCA Meeting, 7 PM Meal, \$ 6.00, Program begins at 7:30 PM Guest speaker: Mark Slay, Managing your fertilizer needs.**
- **March 21: Troup County Association of Beekeepers meeting, 7 PM AG Center**
- **March 23: Enhancing the Safety of Locally Grown Produce Class, certificate awarded at the completion. 9:30 AM – 12-30 PM at the AG Center. Call to register.**

**Brian Maddy is the ANR Agent for Troup County Extension. The Troup County Extension office is located at 114 Church Street, LaGrange, GA. 30240 (706) 883-1675. Monday - Friday/8:00am-5:00pm.**

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