



Photo by J.Dugle

Deer resistant herb garden by Irene Friesen

Do your deer neighbours make foraging visits to your garden? Are you wondering which herbs escape their voracious appetites? In this article, we will talk about growing a deer-resistant herb garden.

First, we need to understand that the nutritional needs of our deer visitors change from season to season and from year to year. Those of us who garden next door to deer habitats have learned to be tentative with our lists of deer-resistant plants. Through experience, we acknowledge that this year's deer-resistant plants might be on next year's deer menu.

There are many on-line lists of deer-resistant plants, but only a few based on Manitoba's deer population. Even in Manitoba there will be variations. Charleswood deer may have very different tastes than Pinawa deer. I rely on Nancy Bremner's deer-resistant plant list: www.wildaboutgardening.org/en/features/section3/deer_plants/deerplants.htm. You will note that many native Manitoba plants are deer resistant.

It is critical to protect perennial herbs in midwinter – the starving season for wildlife. You can protect your herbs by mulching with summer savoury stalks and covering the plants with chicken wire laid down in an undulating pattern.

Type	Deer-Resistant Herbs	Tips
Culinary Herbs	Summer savoury	An excellent deer repellent from July to freeze-up. I plant it around the border of my herb garden and perennial garden and leave it stand throughout winter.
	Sage	Dry leaves whole and crumble before using.
	Thyme	All varieties. Harvest before it flowers, leaving 3 inches. Dry at lowest heat or hang to dry stems down.
	Chives	An excellent deer repellent in early summer.
	Other herbs	My neighbour successfully grows dill outside a fenced garden. Next year I will experiment by planting rosemary, parsley, oregano, basil in the herb garden. Currently I grow these herbs inside the fenced vegetable garden.

Medicinal Herbs	Mint	Mint can easily take over a garden so plant it in a separate garden bed or in containers, in full sun. Harvest before blooming and lay leaves flat in a cool, dry place to dry out. Mint Tea is an invigorating tonic, digestive aid and antioxidant. Use sachets to freshen clothes in a drawer and blankets in a bag.
	Lemon Balm	Easy to germinate from seed. Harvest the leaves as soon as the flowers begin to open. Lemon Balm Tea is calming. Use crushed leaves as mosquito repellent.
	Munstead Lavender	Harvest leaves and flowers early in the season to create aromatic sachets. Mulch in mid November.
	Speedwell	
	Bee Balm	Also known as Bergamot.
	Ladies Mantle	
	Meadow Rue	
	Evening Primrose	Deer will nibble leaves and stems up to August when the plants are tender.
	Yarrow	Tea: Add 1 tsp. dried herb per cup boiling water, steep for 10 min. sweeten to taste.
	Echinacea	Deer don't eat Echinacea leaves and stems, but they like the buds and flowers so I protect them the plants with chicken wire during blooming.
Ceremonial Herbs	Prairie Sage	Can easily spread throughout your garden so plant prairie sage in a separate garden bed. Harvest in early summer and early fall. If you harvest before the plant goes to seed, it yields a smudge with a sweeter fragrance. Form sage bundles and wrap tightly with red cotton thread. Hang to dry.
	Sweet grass	Can easily spread throughout your garden so plant sweet grass in a separate garden bed. In fall, cut with a scissor leaving at least 3 inches, braid tightly, tie ends with grass and hang to dry.
		