**Strategies for Controlling Deer**

**Segment for Week of Nov. 30, 2020**

This is Steve Ruleson bringing you information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. This week I will talk to you about strategies for controlling deer in your garden.

A herd of beautiful, graceful deer is a stirring sight to see. Most of us are fascinated by these lovely creatures with their dark eyes and soft muzzles. And their tolerance of humans allows us to view them up close. It’s sad, however, for these creatures of the forest who are faced with encroaching development and threatened habitat, many times leaving them little choice but to graze on our treasured garden plants.

Planting the right trees, shrubs, and ornamental flowers is one of the best ways to deter deer. Although, in areas where deer density is moderate to high, this in combination with other controls are recommended. And, even so, don’t be surprised if a plant on the “less likely to eat” list gets eaten.

Deer first seek out plants that are the most palatable or provide vital nutrients. Plants with hairy or fuzzy, prickly and heavily fragrant foliage are not palatable. Deer don’t like fuzzy or hairy texture against their tongues, so plants such as grasses, lambs ear and lady’s mantle would be a last choice on their menu. Although some deer learn to eat around the thorns on plants such as roses, they generally avoid nibbling on prickly foliage. Junipers, sea hollies and bear’s breeches sport this type of foliage. Plants with very aromatic foliage also discourage feeding. Flowering herbs such as sage and thyme as well as catmint, Artemisia, Russian sage, boxwood, salvias and marigolds fall into this category.

Plants that are toxic to deer are an excellent choice located along the garden edge or along grazing routes. Deer cannot tolerate any type of fern as well as false indigo, bleeding hearts, daffodils, Helleborus, Euphorbia, and poppies.

Expect visitations if you plant deer favorites such as Rhododendron & azaleas, hydrangeas, pansies, peonies, hostas, hybrid roses, lilies and fruit trees.

Other controls, both cultural and mechanical, also help to deter deer. Early harvesting of garden crops reduces the time they are exposed to deer. Plant palatable crops and ornamentals as far away from wooded areas as possible. Fencing, frightening devices and deer repellent products can also be effective.

The best way to keep deer out of the garden is to fence them out, an expensive proposition. Deer can jump over an eight-foot-tall fence, so a fence will need to be at least that tall to keep them out. Black mesh deer netting fastened to wooden 4x4 posts can be an effective and less expensive fencing option. Motion activated sprinklers do a good job of scaring deer off and deer repellents, especially ones that have a spreader-sticker additive, can be effective if used religiously.

From my perch near the mouth of Occohannock Creek, I recorded xxx of rain last week.

For answers to Gardening questions call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office.