

## Flowers pass the Lake Monticello deer test

Written by Sunny Lenz

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Deer and voles are the bane of gardeners everywhere. Fighting them has not worked for me so I do my best to discourage them. Dogs help keep deer out of the garden and so do fences, but planting things that are not their favorites is a good place to start. They will eat anything when they have to, so know that nothing is truly deer proof. At Lake Monticello, a true test for deer resistance, barberry and its relative the mahonia are not tasty. The amaryllis family includes belladonna lily, known as 'naked ladies' or 'resurrection lily', which are not eaten by deer or voles. If you use mulch, make a pocket of sand and chicken grit where you plant to discourage voles. Many plants are listed as resistant but have they passed the Lake Monticello test?

In spring, you may lose tulips to squirrels as well as deer but narcissus and daffodils will not be bothered. Snow drops (galanthus) will bloom first and snowflakes (leucojum) will follow. Crocus has no pest problems. Virginia bluebells and pulmonaria are not tasty. Next to show up are sweet woodruff and epimedium sulphurum for shade as well as brunnera and myosotis, both called 'forget-me-not'. In sun, deer avoid dianthus; 'pinks' and 'sweet William'. After that, everything comes out of the ground. Acanthus (bear's britches), thalictrum (meadow rue), Japanese painted fern, ajuga (bugle weed) bloom all in late spring. Peonies, iris, nepeta (catmint), and all the alliums from the smaller caeruleum to the largest globe master are not deer's choice for dinner. Red hot Poker (kniphofia) blooms next and sea holly (eryngium) are overlooked by grazing garden visitors. Centaurea and coreopsis are also billed as deer resistant. In summer, bee balm, baptisia, and cone flower will bloom and spread along with Joe Pye weed and its relative, perennial ageratum (eupatorium coelestinum). Crocosmia (mont-bretia), which lines the roads in Ireland, does well in sun and ligularia in shade; both are left alone in the summer border. Russian sage and butterfly weed (aesclepius) in its many hybrid forms do well in the battle to find what deer won't eat. Beach flowers like the native blanket flower (gaillardia) and evergreen rosemary are left alone. Many heleniums (sneezeweed) go untouched. Giant perennial hibiscus blooms uneaten.

Later in the season, golden rod shines out. Look for solidago 'fireworks' for a showy display. Many St. John's wort varieties do well but be careful of the spreaders; they are vigorous and aggressive. The wonderful blue mist shrub (caryopteris) blooms late; 'dark knight' is my favorite with its deep true blue. Hens and Chicks and all the sempervivums with their precision spiral foliage creep around. Agastache in rainbow colors from 'blue fortune' to 'tutti- fruiti', amsonia or 'blue star', and asters, the last to bloom for me are all deer resistant. The wonderful lycorus 'radiata' with its scarlet spider flower and sternbergia, fall crocus, both in the amaryllis family will not be eaten by deer or voles. Chrysanthemums do not attract deer.

Blue and fuzzy foliage plants; artimesia, lamb's ear, lavender and lychnis are not liked by deer. Fleshy foliage is also avoided; ice plant (delosperma) and sedum. The milky sap of euphorbia which comes in all sizes deters munching. Many fragrant herbs mentioned above as well as

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teucrium and thyme are too strong for deer and rabbits. Last, the prickly plants, cactus, holly, osmanthus, and yucca are not often attacked by foraging animals.

This long list offers hope but I know that some have failed the Lake Monticello test. I'd like to see them all planted in a border near the gate - let's see how they stand up to the voracious deer at the lake!