



the iowa gardener

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Deer-Resistant Trees and Shrubs for Iowa

Home gardeners should realize that no plant species is completely deer-resistant. Deer will browse even on the most resistant plants when faced with starvation. However, careful plant selection, along with repellents and fencing, can reduce deer damage.

Damage caused by deer browsing on trees and shrubs can be a problem in some rural and suburban areas in Iowa. The amount of damage depends upon seasonal factors, weather conditions, availability of alternative foods, and plant palatability.

Prevention of deer browsing is difficult. Home gardeners may be able to avoid some deer damage by careful plant selection. Horticulturists and wildlife specialists at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, have identified trees and shrubs that are rarely or seldom, occasionally, and frequently damaged by deer. Those plant species adapted to Iowa are listed below.

Good luck!

Plants Rarely or Seldom Severely Damaged

Common Name	Botanical Name
Barberry	<i>Berberis</i> spp.
Redosier Dogwood	<i>Cornus sericea</i>
Forsythia	<i>Forsythia</i> spp.
Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>
Beautybush	<i>Kolkwitzia amabilis</i>
Norway Spruce	<i>Picea abies</i>
White Spruce	<i>Picea glauca</i>
Colorado Spruce	<i>Picea pungens</i>
Mugo Pine	<i>Pinus mugo</i>
Austrian Pine	<i>Pinus nigra</i>
Scotch Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Common Lilac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>

Plants Occasionally Severely Damaged

Common Name	Botanical Name
White Fir	<i>Abies concolor</i>
Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Silver Maple	<i>Acer saccharinum</i>
Sugar Maple	<i>Acer saccharum</i>
Common Horsechestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier</i> spp.
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster</i> spp.
Common Witchhazel	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>
Rose-of-Sharon	<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>
Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea</i> spp.
Privet	<i>Ligustrum</i> spp.
Eastern White Pine	<i>Pinus strobus</i>
Potentilla	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>
Douglas Fir	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>
White Oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>
Northern Red Oak	<i>Quercus rubra</i>
Willows	<i>Salix</i> spp.
Anthony Waterer Spirea	<i>Spiraea x bumalda</i> 'Anthony Waterer'
Bridalwreath Spirea	<i>Spiraea prunifolia</i>
Persian Lilac	<i>Syringa x persica</i>
Japanese Tree Lilac	<i>Syringa reticulata</i>
American Linden	<i>Tilia americana</i>
Canadian Hemlock	<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>
Old-Fashioned Weigela	<i>Weigela florida</i>

Plants Frequently Severely Damaged

Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>
Eastern Redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>
Clematis	<i>Clematis</i> spp.
Corneliancherry Dogwood	<i>Cornus mas</i>
Winged Euonymus	<i>Euonymus alatus</i>
Apples, Crabapples	<i>Malus</i> spp.
Cherries, Plums	<i>Prunus</i> spp.
Rhododendrons	<i>Rhododendron</i> spp.
Hybrid Tea Rose	<i>Rosa x hybrid</i>
Yews	<i>Taxus</i> spp.
American Arborvitae	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>