Steps to take in the landscape to curb deer damage

Sometimes when damage occurs in the landscape, there’s little homeowners can do to prevent it. The recent ice storm is a good example of that. However, when wildlife comes in and causes damage, there are some steps that can be taken to help cut down on damage.

This is the time of year when many people like to spend time outdoors. The weather is cool, the mosquitoes have taken a vacation and it is generally enjoyable to hang out outside around the firepit making s’mores. The vibrant color of mums and other fall plants make the space inviting.

Unfortunately, humans aren’t the only species to find these fall plants attractive. Wildlife also enjoys these plants, especially white-tailed deer. When the weather begins to cool down, wildlife may be looking for a food source as natural vegetation begins to die back.

While homeowners may enjoy seeing the wildlife in their yards, they don’t enjoy seeing uprooted plants, stripped branches on trees and shrubs and damaged bark on trees.

While mums and daffodils aren’t a favorite among deer, they do have a taste for pansies and tulips. Although these plants are great for fall color, they will attract deer. In the spring, choose annual herbaceous plants such as amaranth, cosmos, French marigold, heliotrope, lantana, periwinkle, salvia, signet marigold, snapdragon and zinnia, which will look great in the summer.

When choosing herbaceous perennial flowers, consider bee balm, flax, foxglove, lamb’s ears, lavender, primrose, ragwort, rosemary, sage, thyme, toad lily, iris, goldenrod and Shasta daisy, among others.

Safe bets among woody plants include buckthorn, Chinese junipers, dogwoods, Chinese holly, honey locust, various pines, American holly, ginkgo, sumac, yucca, loblolly pine, boxelder and common boxwood.

Homeowners also may opt for physical exclusion. For fences to be effective, they need to be 8 feet high to keep deer out. If your property butts up to a wooded area, install a fence along the tree line. To help protect the tender bark of young trees, homeowners may want to consider using wire cages around the trunks. Be sure to support the cages securely by using metal posts.

Just as dogs can be a deterrent for burglars, they also are effective at repelling deer. Repellents are another option. Those that have demonstrated the best results are thiram-based contact repellents such as Chaperone and Spotrete-F, along with repellents made with putrescent egg
solids. Keep in mind that repellents can help reduce damage, but won’t eliminate it. As long as there is a food source, the deer will be there.

A homeowners best bet is to combine judicious selection of plants with other control methods. Keep in mind, however, it’s a good idea to begin control measures before significant damage occurs.

###