

Drought Tolerant and Deer Resistant Plants

Destructive deer and hot, dry summers are two very common issues in the Rogue Valley. Drought tolerant and deer resistant plants are a good combination to aim for because the qualities in plants that repel deer can often be found in drought tolerant species- such as heavy oil content, textured or hairy foliage, strong odors, and tough, less succulent leaves.

- The key to keeping drought tolerant plants happy and more unpalatable to deer is to give them the habitat they are used to- so don't water them every day just because its 90 degrees!
 - **Good drainage** is usually essential- if you don't have it, you'll probably have to water even less
 - **No heavy fertilizing** is needed- only organic or slow release fertilizer if called for at time of planting
 - overfertilizing will attract deer
 - if plants look yellowed, it is usually from too much water, not lack of fertilizer
 - **Dedicate an area** to drought tolerant plants- don't try to mix plants that need regular water with drought tolerant plants and put them on the same irrigation system/timer- one group will suffer
 - **Do not overwater!**
 - Best to plant drought tolerant plants in early spring or early fall so they can get established with the rains, many plants once established need no summer water or an occasional deep soak
 - Don't place them where they will get extra water from lawn areas or runoff from other irrigated areas.
- **How to get good drainage**
 - mound up soil when making new beds or planting a new plant, create a berm
 - plant drought tolerant plants on a hillside or slope
 - if lots of clay, amend with 1/4"-10 gravel (sharp edge, no fines) and compost- will help break down clay over time
 - mulch with at least a 1" layer of 1/4"-10 gravel to keep dirt from rotting the crown of plant, to retain moisture during heat and keep plant roots warmer in winter
- **How to water drought tolerant plants**
 - **OBSERVE**- most plants need to dry out before the next watering- stick your finger a few inches into soil (well below mulch, which will feel dry), if it is cool and damp, don't need to water yet
 - **INFREQUENT BUT DEEP SOAK**
 - train plants to have deep roots, not shallow
 - often a deep soak every 2 weeks in heat of summer is enough- easier to do with drip irrigation than sprinklers
 - **Watering rule of thumb** (depends on site and soil type)
 - 1st year of planting-water deeply once a week for first month of summer, then water once every 2 weeks for 2nd and 3rd month of summer
 - water once a month the 2nd summer and don't water again

- **How to find drought tolerant plants**
 - Look to **natives**- can tolerate summer drought and winter wet
 - Look to **Mediterranean plants**- similar climate (also cold hardy Australian and northern California plants, hardy desert plants/succulents)
 - get help from your local nursery!- we've talked to countless customers and worked in our own gardens and have seen what works

- **How to find deer resistant plants**
 - look around your neighborhood
 - drive or walk around heavy deer areas- Jacksonville, hills of east Medford, wooded parts of Ashland- observe what has been chewed- deer can be very neighborhood specific
 - read lists, but be ready to experiment
 - use Liquid Fence, Plantskydd, or similar product on all new plantings to discourage initial browsing
 - use cages around most new trees- to prevent antler damage and new growth chewing
 - can depend on time of year you plant- when deer are especially hungry (fall and winter) they can graze on almost anything
 - use poisonous, strongly scented or sharply textured plants (grasses, sometimes prickly/thorny textures, fuzzy/hairy leaves, pine needles, etc.)
 - talk to your local nursery- we know from our experiences and those of our customers and landscapers what has worked and what hasn't

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