

The British Deer Society



As the leading wild deer organisation in the UK, the British Deer Society works to enable the deer of the United Kingdom to exist and flourish in today's environment ensuring their future is secure for generations to come.

The British Deer Society:

- Runs courses and provides training to ensure that, whatever your interest in deer, you will receive the best quality training to develop your individual skills and knowledge.
- Undertakes and funds research projects ensuring that deer, their issues and their threats are scientifically explored and understood.
- Provides a team of technical experts that work to prime and influence governmental and public bodies to ensure that any legislation or regulation is practical and sensible and has deer welfare as its primary objective.
- Works to ensure that there is a sustainable, healthy population of deer in the UK that can exist in harmony with the environment and the people that live there, look after it, or visit it.

Membership

Over 6,000 members support our charitable remit to promote the welfare of British deer. It's easy to join and as a member you will also receive a copy of our journal, *Deer*, four times a year, as well as membership of a local branch with its social activities, range days, talks and demonstrations.

Join us online at www.bds.org.uk



Shop

You'll find a wide range of books, DVDs, and stalking essentials in our online shop as well as BDS clothing, seasonal gifts and cards.

Shop online at www.bds.org.uk

British Deer Society – the deer experts

There are six species of deer living freely in the British countryside. Each species has specific characteristics which make it well-suited for the variety of habitats found across the country and highly adaptable to environmental changes. A mixture of native and introduced species, they make a valuable contribution to Britain's biodiversity and are some of our most engaging British mammals.



Photo courtesy of Corinne Duggins



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Wild Deer of the UK



Deer & Gardens



Photo courtesy of Tracey Rich

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Deer in your garden



Why are deer in gardens?

As a nation of keen gardeners we live alongside nature in many forms. Increasingly we are sharing our gardens with wildlife, and burgeoning populations of deer together with dwindling natural space means that more of them are finding the lure of tasty garden plants irresistible.

Which deer are found in gardens?

In Britain there are six species of deer, but it is largely the Roe deer, Fallow deer and Muntjac deer that are the most likely to visit your garden.

Whilst you are most likely to see them between dawn and dusk when they are most active, they are increasingly also visiting gardens in broad daylight. Generally however, these reasonably large mammals live mainly in woodlands.

The trouble with deer in gardens



Once in a garden, deer can be a nuisance. They will eat prized plants and blooms as well as causing damage, particularly to young plants or those with woody stems. Deer need to rub their heads to remove their 'velvet' – the antler covering that is lost in the spring. 'Fraying' is the term given to the resultant damage caused to stems and branches. Deer may also cause damage to plants as they use local vegetation to display during the breeding season too.

In general deer damage tends to be a fraying, and tatty cuts to plants, shrubs and trees. Deer do not have upper teeth and

therefore the way in which they eat plants is recognisable from other potential garden pests such as rabbits.

How to keep a balance in your garden

If you have deer in your garden you'd be forgiven for thinking you have a serious problem. But in many ways you are lucky to be able to see such amazing creatures at such close proximity. As prey animals, deer are generally secretive and difficult to approach in the wild. Having them so close to you in your garden will make you the envy of many keen wildlife watchers. However, if you'd rather they weren't there there are several means of discouraging them.

Keeping deer out



Fencing

Preventing deer entering your garden can be extremely difficult and will call for specialised fencing that may require planning permission, is expensive and requires specialist installation. Regular maintenance is essential and even with correct installation there are welfare issues to consider as deer are prone to becoming caught in the fence.

Deterrents

Deterring deer is the next best means of preventing deer damage. There are many products on the market in the forms of sprays, sonic devices etc which vary in effectiveness depending on your particular situation. Some traditional deterrents such as lion dung and human hair in the garden have also been shown to be effective in certain circumstances.

With all deterrents, their efficacy is dependent on the individual conditions. Deer are specialised prey animals and respond directly to changes in their environment. This means that they will become used to non-harmful deterrents over time.

Protection

Young plants and trees can be protected by placing plastic tubes around the stems which should be staked to stop deer breaking them. The tubes need to be at least 1.5m tall, which is the average browse height of deer, and should be removed as the plants grow and can withstand browsing.



Photo courtesy of Hugh Rose

Living with deer



By far the best way to deter deer from damaging garden plants is to provide them with plenty of alternative plants to browse thus minimising damage to your favourites. There are also plants which deer find unpalatable which can further restrict the amount of overall damage, although during harsh weather conditions even these may not escape the attention of a hungry deer.

Having greater diversity in your garden can also benefit other wildlife and natural predators ensuring that you have a healthy and balanced garden with minimal use of chemical controls.

Below are some examples of plants that are particularly unpalatable or favoured by deer in the garden.

Unpalatable plants



Rhododendron

Camellia

Hydrangea

Lavender

Favoured plants



Lupin

Rose

Heather

Bluebell

It is unlikely that you will rid your garden completely of your deer visitors, but you can learn to live with them and enjoy their company. They are fascinating creatures to observe and with patience you can get unparalleled views of some of our shyest wild animals.