

Keep Ornamentals Safe From Deer, Rabbits

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Now is the time to protect young trees and shrubs from deer and rabbits, said Dr. J. Robert Nuss, professor of ornamental horticulture in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"While other animals may cause damage during the winter, these are the main culprits in Pennsylvania," said Nuss. "They can damage and kill plants that are expensive to replace."

Deer are browsers, preferring to nibble on the buds, twig-ends and leaves of woody plants. Browsing destroys new growth and deforms shrubs and trees. Extremely young plants may be eaten completely.

Unless you have a large number of young trees and shrubs to protect, the most economical and practical method is fencing individual plants. "Many homeowners enjoy seeing deer on their land and don't want to fence them out of the entire area," said Nuss. "Individual fencing allows deer in the garden but keeps them from causing mischief."

To fence a plant, drive three or four tall wooden stakes into the ground around it, about 48 inches from the trunk, or far enough away to prevent feeding in the lower branches. Attach woven wire or plastic mesh to these stakes to form a circular fence.

"Fencing must be high enough to protect all parts of the plant within deer's reach," said Nuss. "If the tree or shrub is under 3 feet tall, you will need to make the fence several feet taller than the plant."

Young trees and shrubs should be fenced every fall until their primary branches are about 5 feet high. "Inspect your fencing at least once a week," said Nuss. "After heavy snowfall, you may need to make it taller. Deer can walk across hardened snow and nibble on the tops of plants."

If you have many plants to protect, you can surround the entire area with woven-wire fence at least 8 feet tall or at least 11 feet tall if the land slopes and deer can jump from above. "This method is expensive but will keep out other destructive animals as well," said Nuss.

Chemical deer repellents are another alternative and can be bought from garden centers. A

homemade repellent can be made from 6 spoiled eggs, 3 gallons of water, and 3 tablespoons of 75 percent Thiam, a mild fungicide.

"Plants sprayed with repellents taste and smell unpleasant to deer," said Nuss. "But they wash off in rain and snow, and won't deter extremely hungry deer."

If deer are a severe problem, consider planting trees and shrubs that naturally resist browsing. "No plant is completely deer-proof, but trees such as box elders, black locusts, pines and spruces resist deer damage," said Nuss. "Barberies, hollies, tree peonies, rhododendrons and lilacs are deer-resistant shrubs."

Rabbits can cause as much damage as deer, chewing the bark

off young trees and shrubs. Rabbits can kill plants by girdling them -- gnawing off a ring of bark all the way around the trunks. "Fortunately, they're easier to control than deer because they can reach only to about 24 inches high," said Nuss.

A variety of rabbit-proof wrappings, available at garden centers, can be quickly and easily wound around plants' trunks. These wrappings are weatherproof but should be checked regularly to make sure they're still securely wound.

Individual fencing also is practical and inexpensive. "It can be constructed the same as deer fencing, except that the bottom of the

fence must be buried 2 to 3 inches into the ground so rabbits can't tunnel underneath," said Nuss.

"Rabbit fencing should have holes no larger than 1 inch," said Nuss. "Stakes holding the fencing must be firmly planted and the mesh must be securely attached. Otherwise, rabbits can press against the mesh and nibble at the plant right through the holes."

Larger areas can be fenced the same way, with the bottom of the fence curled outward and buried 6 inches. "Whether you're using plastic wrapping, individual fencing or large-area fencing, make sure it's at least 24 inches tall," said Nuss. "If snow accumulates, the fencing must be 24 inches

higher than the snow. Check larger fenced-in areas frequently. If a rabbit does get caught inside, it may not be able to escape."

Chemical repellents also will keep rabbits away from ornamental plants, but they must be reapplied frequently, especially after it has rained. Hungry rabbits competing for food will nibble plants even if they are treated with a repellent.

"With a little time and care, you can protect young ornamentals from deer and rabbits," said Nuss. "Of course, no method is 100 percent effective, and you may have a little damage each winter. As young trees and shrubs grow, the problem naturally will diminish."

GATT Proposal May Have Problems

DES MOINES, Iowa — The draft trade proposal on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) could be a building block or a stumbling block, according to the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC).

The proposal, developed by GATT Director General Arthur Dunkel, obviously does not go as far as we would like, but it is a useful basis for negotiations, said NPPC President John Hardin.

"GATT officials can either use it to build a successful final agreement or cripple GATT negotiations by insisting on retaining its flaws," Hardin said.

Hardin appeared before the House Agriculture Committee during its hearing on the GATT on Jan. 9. He was available for questioning from the committee alongside American Meat Industry President J. Patrick Boyle, who presented the testimony for the Meat Industry Trade Policy Council (MITPC) on behalf of meat industry groups, including NPPC. Other MITPC members are the American Farm Bureau, the National Cattlemen's Association, the U.S. Meat Export Federation, and the American Meat Institute.

NPPC shares the concerns, such as the need for further reduction in subsidies, pointed out by the MITPC in its testimony. The NPPC leader said that the Dunkel text makes only modest reductions. Therefore, the United States

must have a firm commitment to continue elimination of trade distorting practices at the end of the proposed six-year agreement.

"Without a good strong continuation clause the GATT is not good enough," said Hardin.

The Dunkel text does provide a

positive framework to resolve sanitary and phytosanitary claims that are core issues for the U.S. pork industry. The GATT must provide assurances that the European Community must drop unfair trade barriers by using tools, such as its Third Country Meat Directive.

Hardin said, "The U.S. pork industry is the low-cost producer of pork in the world. Any genuine reduction in subsidies and opening of market access will benefit U.S. producers. But the Dunkel test is a long way from meeting the original goals of the GATT."

NFU To Converge In Des Moines

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Interesting speakers, lively entertainment, and heartland hospitality will highlight the National Farmers Union (NFU) 90th Anniversary Convention.

Farmers union members from across the United States will converge in the Marriott Hotel in downtown Des Moines, Iowa for four days of challenging and insightful discussions on a plethora of issues that impact the quality of life for rural Americans.

Among the presenters at the

convention will be R.W. Apple Jr., the internationally recognized correspondent for the "New York Times." He will direct a lively panel discussion among the leaders of several commodity organizations regarding policy differences and philosophical directives.

Gerard Doornbos, president of the Netherlands Christian Farmers and Growers Organization, will share a European perspective on international agricultural trade. Convention delegates include

Senator James Exon of Nebraska and Representative David Nagle of Iowa. All of the presidential candidates have been invited to voice their political views to those present.

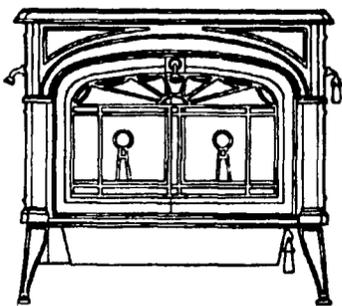
Delegates and members will be able to choose from a variety of interesting workshops covering issues such as farm safety, farming with two generations, and world agricultural conditions.

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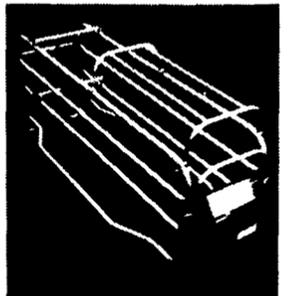
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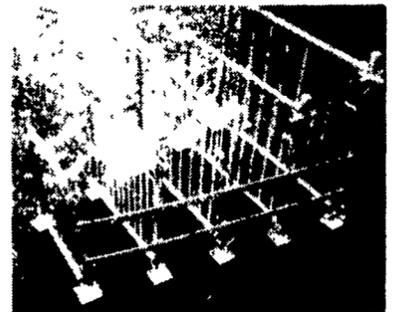
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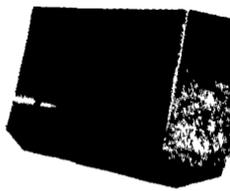
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