

Electric Fence Deters Deer, Protects Plants

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — With the arrival of spring, many people are eager to enjoy the pleasures of their grounds and gardens. Unfortunately, in many places, so are hungry deer. With the explosive growth of Maryland's deer population over the last decade, people in more rural areas are finding it almost impossible to maintain a usable garden or to protect fruit trees and other high-value crops from hungry deer, according to Jonathan Kays, natural resources specialist with the Cooperative Extension Service, Maryland Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Even suburban residents living

in more developed areas are experiencing increased damage to prized plants and shrubs. Fortunately for them, said Kays, an affordable electric deer fence has proved effective in keeping deer out of areas up to three acres. The fence is usually made of polywire, a high-visibility plastic filament wire interwoven with strands of stainless steel, which conducts electricity. A single strand of polywire is suspended about 30 inches above the ground from three- to four-foot-tall fiberglass rods at intervals of 30 to 50 feet. Two strands of wire also can be used, one 20 inches and the

other 36 inches above the ground. Aluminum foil "flags" are attached to the wire with tape or clips. The undersides of the flags are baited with peanut butter. When deer smell the peanut butter and try to eat it, they touch the flags with their noses and get a shock. The shock causes no serious damage, but is painful enough to leave a lasting impression. "The baited flags are an important element of the electric fence," Kays said, "because a shock to the nose is more of a deterrent than a shock to the leg would be if a deer


walked into the fence." Electrical current is provided to the fence by a high-powered charger. Chargers with outputs of two joules or more are available from electric fence companies. An A.C.-powered charger costs the least per joule of output and requires little maintenance. In many cases, the charger can be located at a nearby power source and an aluminum wire strung to where the fence starts. Because of the pain caused by the charge, landowners who install this fence must address potential liability issues, including the possibility of acci-

dental shock to children or other people. Maintenance of the fence is crucial to its success. It must be checked every day for the first few months to ensure that the voltage is sufficient and that the fence has not been knocked down. The flags must be rebaited every six to eight weeks. This type of fence costs less than conventional high-tensile electric fencing — about \$277 for a three-acre area. It can be taken down and moved easily when necessary. If you would like more information on baited polywire fences, contact the cooperative extension service office in your county.



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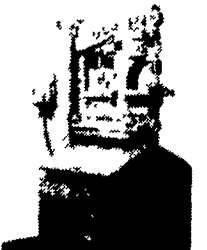
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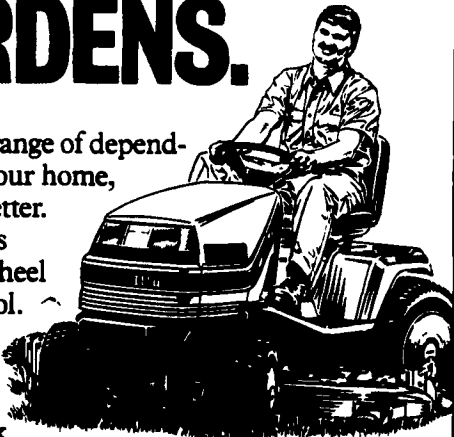


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