

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

What We'll Do for A Buck

By Cynthia Brian

"They run like deer, jump like deer, and think like deer." Charles Barkley



Oh Deer...

Photos Cynthia Brian

The back gate had been left open. He walked right in to help himself to dinner leaving his telltale droppings and the roses beheaded. "Bummer," I whispered to myself as I locked the gate, satisfied that he would not return to devour my prized agapanthus.

The next evening as I went outside to check the nightlights, I thought I saw the gigantic buck in my upper garden. When I blinked, he was gone. "I'm being paranoid," I thought to myself. "There's no way a deer could jump this eight foot fence."

Wrong!

Making my morning flower rounds, there he stood in my cutting garden, proud as a Poppa, fearless of my presence. He gazed at me with those huge brown eyes as if to say, "Hi Cynthia! Aren't I smart. I came to visit you!"

I was stunned to see him inside my high walls. In case he could understand me, I shouted at him to get out as I ran to open the locked gate. For a moment he didn't budge, then, ever so slowly he ambled to the formal rose garden and with one effortless leap, hurdled the fence.

Years ago I purposely planted extra crops outside the barrier to make sure that our enclave remained a sanctuary for my private plantings. This season, two bucks along with a doe and her twins have been dining on the plums, prunes, apricots, apples, and Asian pears in the orchard. They pay me no heed when I'm weeding as they munch away. As long as they stay outside my interior boundaries, I am happy to co-exist with them. I reason that the wildlife inhabited this region first, while I'm the interloper. Although we are surrounded by open space with all the endemic

feral animals roaming the hills and visiting our pastures, in the more than two decades that we've lived here, no creature has ever traversed the fence.

This was TROUBLE in all capitals.

It was time to dig into my bag of tricks. In my book, "Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul," I chronicled a humorous true story about a garden plagued by a marauding moose. I hoped to utilize a few of those antler deterrents for my uninvited buck. I began by attaching dryer sheets of Bounce on all of my major plants plus tacking them to the outside of the white pickets every six inches. The smell supposedly deters deer. I also installed waving flags and a burlap barrier on the areas where he leapt.

Didn't work. He returned for dinner that night.

Next, I bought bars of Irish Spring soap to scrape around the property. The dirt and plants smelled as fresh as the Emerald Isle. He basked in the clean fragrance of the leprechauns, leaping with glee.

The third night I installed motion detection lights. He reveled in the spotlight. The star jumped in.

The fourth night, I blasted the radio tuned to a raspy rap station. Mr. Buck grooved and pranced in my back yard.

The fifth night, frustrated, I ventured to the garden center where I met other gardeners deluged with deer. We commiserated while comparing notes. I bought several different animal repellents. Following directions, I sprinkled the granules of hot peppers and sprayed the mixture of rotten eggs formulated to drive critters away with a mild irritation to their nasal passages. The smell gagged me, but the aroma aroused him. He ate my agapanthus.

On the sixth night, I positioned wooden pallets and garbage cans around the perimeter to discourage his high jump. He's an Olympian.



Delicious Asian pears are a favorite fruit of deer and humans.