

Here's a list of perennial plants (they come back every year) that are also deer-resistant - meaning deer usually avoid eating them due to taste, texture, or toxicity. Keep in mind that if food is scarce, deer may nibble on almost anything, but these are generally considered safe bets:

## Perennial Flowers (Deer-Resistant)

**Plant Name** Notes

Lavender Strong scent deters deer

Russian Sage (Perovskia atriplicifolia) Aromatic, drought-tolerant

Yarrow (Achillea millefolium) Ferny foliage, blooms summer

Coneflower (Echinacea) Pollinator-friendly

Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia) Tough native wildflower

Bee Balm (Monarda) Mint family, attracts pollinators

Bleeding Heart (Dicentra spectabilis) Shade-tolerant

Peony Not appealing to deer, long-lived

**Columbine** (*Aquilegia*) Spring bloomer, unique flowers

Coreopsis Low-maintenance, sunny spots

## Perennial Herbs (Deer-Resistant)

**Plant Name** Notes

Sage Aromatic leaves deer avoid

Oregano Great ground cover + culinary

use

Thyme Low-growing, fragrant

Chives Onion-like smell repels deer

Mint Spreads easily, deer dislike smell

### Deer-Resistant Ornamental Grasses

**Plant Name** Notes

Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum) Native, drought-tolerant

Blue Fescue (Festuca glauca) Compact, bluish foliage

**Feather Reed Grass** 

(Calamagrostis)

Elegant and upright

Miscanthus (many varieties) Tall, showy, resilient



### Shrubs (Bonus: also perennials)

**Shrub Name** Notes

Boxwood Classic evergreen, not tasty to

deer

Butterfly Bush (Buddleja) Attracts pollinators, not deer

Spirea Compact and easy-care

Barberry Thorny and deer-resistant

Pieris Japonica Evergreen, early blooms

## **Tips for Deer-Resistance:**

- Fragrant, fuzzy, spiky, or toxic plants are usually avoided by deer.
- Use interplanting strategies: mix deer-resistant with more vulnerable plants to confuse deer.

• Consider motion-activated sprinklers or scent deterrents for extra protection in high-deer-pressure areas.

Around Detroit / Macomb County, Michigan, the gardening region is USDA Hardiness Zone 6b — meaning winter low temps average between about **-5** °F to **0** °F. (Plantmaps)

So here are plants that are:

- Perennial / woody (come back every year in Zone 6b), and
- Generally deer-resistant

You'll want to select plants from the lists below based on your sun exposure, soil, etc.

# Best Deer-Resistant Perennials & Shrubs for Zone 6b

Here are plants that tend to do well in Zone 6b AND are usually avoided by deer. Of course, nothing is absolutely deer-proof, but these are good bets.

Plant / Shrub	Sun / Shade / Soil	<b>Additional Notes</b>
<b>Lavender</b> (e.g. <i>Lavandula</i> angustifolia)	Full sun, well-drained, somewhat dry soil	Fragrant; deer dislike scent and texture.
Russian Sage (Perovskia atriplicifolia)	Full sun, tolerates poor soil	Silvery foliage, drought tolerant.
Salvia (many hardy salvias)	Full sun to part sun	Leaves smell strong; flowers attract pollinators.
Coneflower (Echinacea)	Full sun, average soil	Summer bloom; hardy and tough.
Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia)	Full sun; average to rich soil	Long bloom period; self-seeds.
Yarrow (Achillea)	Full sun; well-drained soil	Flat clusters of blooms; good for cutting.

Bee Balm (Monarda)	Sun or part shade; moist soil	Strong scented foliage;
,	•	attracts bees & butterflies.
Peony (Paeonia)	Full sun, rich soil	Big showy blooms; deer generally avoid.
Catmint / Nepeta	Full sun; well-drained	Aromatic and flowering; good filler.
Lamb's Ear (Stachys byzantina)	Sun; well-drained soil	Fuzzy leaves; texture deer avoid.
<b>Ornamental Grasses</b> (e.g. <i>Panicum virgatum</i> switchgrass)	Sun; tolerates varied soils	Adds structure; deer usually ignore.
Astilbe	Part shade to shade; moist soil	Feathery blooms; does well under trees.
Japanese Pachysandra (Pachysandra terminalis)	Shade; moist soil	Good evergreen ground cover.
Barberry (Berberis)	Sun to partial; moderately well drained soil	Thorny, bitter; deer tend to avoid.
Butterfly Bush (Buddleja)	Full sun; well drained	Blooms midsummer; fragrance helps deter.
Boxwood (Buxus)	Part shade to sun; well-drained, slightly acidic soil	Evergreen shrub; good for structure or hedging.
Lavender of Loire / Lavandula species suitable for cold	Full sun; dry / rocky soil	Look for hardy cultivars that can take the cold.

# Michigan Native, Deer-Resistant Perennials & Groundcovers

These are plants native or well established in Michigan that tend to be avoided by deer. Source: MSU Extension + "What to Plant in Your Landscape... Deer-Resistant Native Plants for Mid-Michigan". (Morning Ag Clips)

Plant	Conditions	Notes on Deer Resistance / Other Advantages
Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)	Full sun; well-drained to average soil	Strong blue/purple flowers; deer tend to avoid. Attracts pollinators. (Morning Ag Clips)
Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia hirta, etc.)	Full sun; average soils	Tough; good for informal or prairie-style gardens. Deer usually avoid the foliage/texture. (Agri College)
<b>Wild Geranium</b> (several <i>Geranium</i> spp.)	Part shade to sun; moist to average soil (but avoid waterlogged)	Smaller flowers; good groundcover/edge plant. Deer tend to pass over due to leaf texture and growth habit. (Morning Ag Clips)
Columbine (Aquilegia canadensis)	Part shade; well-drained soil	Spring bloomer; delicate flowers; deer generally avoid. ( <u>Lawn Care 21st</u> <u>Century</u> )
Bee Balm (Monarda)	Sun to part shade; somewhat moist soil	Strong scent in leaves; attracts bees & hummingbirds; deer dislike the smell. (Morning Ag Clips)
Yarrow (Achillea millefolium, native strains)	Full sun; well-drained soil; tolerates dry	Fern-like foliage; aromatic; blooms summer long; deer avoid. ( <u>Agri College</u> )
Blazing Star (Liatris spicata etc.)	Sun; moist to average soil	Upright spikes of flowers; interesting texture; deer resistance tends to be good when interplanted. (Agri College)
Joe-Pye Weed (Eutrochium spp.)	Sun to part shade; moist soil (edge of wet)	Tall, showy flower clusters; good for pollinators; deer often leave it alone. (Morning Ag Clips)

Wild Indigo (Baptisia spp.)	Full sun; well-drained soil	Deep roots; attractive blooms; fairly drought tolerant once established; deer resistant. (Morning Ag Clips)
<b>Boneset</b> (Eupatorium perfoliatum)	Sun to part shade; moist soil	Summer blooms; useful in naturalistic gardens; deer resistance moderate to good. (Morning Ag Clips)
Virginia Waterleaf (Hydrophyllum virginianum)	Shade; moist, rich soil	Woodland groundcover; deer tend not to browse heavily. (Morning Ag Clips)
Jack-in-the-Pulpit (Arisaema triphyllum)	Shade; moist soil; woodland settings	Unique form; toxic parts discourage deer; good for understory. (Better Homes & Gardens)
Wild Ginger (Asarum canadense)	Shade; moist soil; good for ground cover under trees	Low, spreading; deer usually avoid it. (Morning Ag Clips)
Ironweed (Vernonia noveboracensis)	Sun; moist to average soil	Late summer blooms; tall, sturdy stalks; deer resistance tends to be strong. (Wikipedia)
Hay-Scented Fern (Dennstaedtia punctilobula)	Shade; dry to average soil; woodland edge	Fragrant when disturbed; deer tend to avoid; good groundcover in shaded places. (Better Homes & Gardens)



# Caveats / Tips

- Establishment stage: young plants are more vulnerable. Fencing or temporary protections early on help.
- Site matching: a plant may be deer resistant only if soil, sun, drainage are right. Plants stressed by poor conditions may be browsed more.
- **Deer pressure**: the more hungry or desperate deer are (e.g. during winter, or when preferred food is low), the more likely they are to nibble plants they usually ignore.
- Diversity and layering help: mixture of heights, textures, scents makes a garden less appealing as a "buffet".