

'Deer Doctor' has prescription for deer-proofing your garden

By Kellie Tayer
Correspondent

Got deer, but you don't want 'em?

Sandy Baker, aka the "Deer Doctor," has tips to help you keep the pesky animals out of your garden.

Baker, of Rochester, N.Y., specializes in deer-proofing landscapes. She works for the Humane Society of the United States, an organization that sends her around the country giving seminars on deer-proofing.

She spoke this spring at the Orange branch library in Pepper Pike and the Daisy Hill Nursery in Hunting Valley.

"The HSUS sends me out to areas where the deer population has been displaced because of development. It's a subject that's very popular in the northeastern part of the U.S.," she said.

"I started out mostly in New York, Maryland and Ohio, but I've also been to Wisconsin, Michigan and Virginia," she said via telephone from her home in Rochester, where she has a commanding view of Lake Ontario.

"I got in the business when I served as a trustee at a local nature center. I was president of our little group, and I'd get permits to go where woods were being bulldozed and I would rescue exotic plants, moving them to my woody area where I lived so I could save them.

"We'd have a huge plant sale and make lots of money (for the nature center)."

But sometimes deer had other plans for those plants — especially Baker's favorite

plant, the trillium grandiflorum, also known as white trillium — which Baker likens to caviar for deer.

"My trillium were completely decimated by the deer," she recalls. "I realized I needed to take action, so I did a lot of research and educated myself on the subject of deer-proofing."

Baker eventually started giving talks on the subject and even wrote a book called "How to Deer-Proof Your Garden in Five Easy Steps."

She says if you get tip number one down, everything else will fall into place.

1. Deer behavior - "Understanding deer behavior demystifies the entire process of deer-proofing," Baker says.

Learn about their habitat, educate yourself on what they like to eat (and what they don't), realize they are very much like humans in that they form family units.

The babies are like human babies — they will eat anything, including poisonous plants (which is not the goal in deer-proofing).

2. Plant selection and landscape design - Choose plants that deer don't care for.

Try fuzzy plants such as lamb's ear, foxglove and black-eyed Susans.

They don't like aromatic foliage, either, like cultivated herbs; nor will they eat plants that are spiny, thorny (except roses, which deer love) or have needles.

It's been noted by master gardeners that deer tend to steer clear of plants that yield yellow flowers.

3. Deterrents and repellents - Baker says certain

products that are fantastic, including the Scarecrow Motion Sprinkler by **Contech**, which sets off a noise and a water blast at the deer, sending them packing. It retails between \$60 and \$100.

There are also sprays such as Liquid Fence, Deer Away, Big Game Repellent, Tree Guard and Deer Out.

4. Fencing - This is a very effective way to keep deer out of your garden. Baker says to remember a couple of key concepts when considering fencing:

"A lot of deer will not jump over a four-foot high solid fence because they won't jump over it if they can't see a safe landing spot on the other side.

"But if it's a see-through fence, it needs to be at least 14 feet high. This is the gold standard for keeping them out because they can jump high, but I've never heard of a deer jumping over 14 feet."

5. Design a strategy to deer-proof your garden. Walk your property and plan where the best place is for planting. Don't make it easy for the deer to get to your plants.

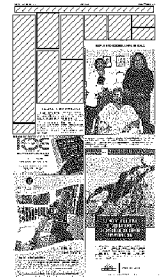
Other helpful tips:

* If you lay heavy metal fencing or sheets of corrugated metal on the ground around the areas you want to protect, deer will not walk on it because it feels strange to them, and they won't like it.

* Get a dog. Deer are afraid of dogs and will avoid them.

* Instead of spraying plants, erect a clothesline around the perimeter of your garden and spray it with deer repellent, enough to thoroughly soak the rope.

* Do not use mothballs or



predator urine.

For more information on deer-proofing or other animal-related topics, visit www.hsu-s.org.



Sandy Baker