

## The Dirt on Hill Country Gardening

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*Planning around Deer*

Much of our area plantings are subject to browsing by different varieties of deer, and, unfortunately many of the plants you want to use for focal points are not deer resistant. To avoid the problem, use your favorite plants that deer also love on their lunch menu and surround them with deer-resistant plants. This barrier of plants could include rosemary, Mexican bush sage, germander, indigo spires, lavenders, most of the salvias, vitex, beach vitex, lantana, mountain laurel, thyme, myoporum, hypericum, yuccas, cassia, and many more. Plant a fairly wide barrier for best results.

While your plants are struggling to get large enough to be a deer-proof barrier, consider dousing the non-deer-resistant plants that are your focal points with Liquid Fence™. It is a purely organic deterrent, albeit a bit smelly, and it will have to be reapplied every couple of weeks or after each rain.

Allow vining plants that are not deer-resistant, such as clematis, passion vine, potato vine, wisteria, evergreen wisteria, snapdragon vine, climbing roses, queen's wreath, to grow up into deer-resistant shrubs and trees. These vines may be planted directly beneath a shrub that is particularly deer-resistant. These would include Texas sage, wax myrtles, Texas bird of paradise tree (*Caesalpinia gilliesii*), mountain laurels, vitex trees, viburnum, yaupon, and such.

When you're doing this type of intermixing to incorporate some specimen plants in your landscape and give them protection from deer, consider the blooming times and colors of the plants you mix so that they are compatible. Also consider the eventual height of the plants. If you want an Anacacho orchid tree, *Bauhinia lunaroides* that will eventually be 10 or so feet tall, you can surround it with upright rosemary, but if your specimen is going to be cape honeysuckle, *Tecomaria capensis*, which grows about four to six feet tall, consider Mexican bush sage.

**Personal Plant of the Week.** Evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*) is a shrub that grows 4 to 6 feet or a bit more. These are truly evergreen, turning a dark bronze in winter, and they are reasonably deer resistant. They produce nondescript flowers that turn into fall/winter berries that the birds love. They prefer good drainage and are a thriving native shrub.

### **Chores for this week.**

- Plant spring blooming bulbs.
- Plant pansies, kale, snapdragons, stock and other cold-hardy annuals and perennials.
- Start acclimating your houseplants for inside since the average first frost is upon us.
- Treat your soil with Medina Soil Conditioner.
- Treat your trees and shrubs with seaweed.

We'd like to do more articles in answer to your questions. We regularly encounter people who ask for some specific, and we'd like more of you to ask us by email: [dsteiny@ktc.com](mailto:dsteiny@ktc.com) or [linda@hexco.com](mailto:linda@hexco.com).