



For the past 10 years, Debra Leavings has tested countless plant varieties to find out what deer don't want to eat.

Deer-Proof Your Yard With Plants

If deer are destroying your garden plants, maybe it's time to stop fighting them and learn to live with them. According to Debra Leavings, that doesn't mean you feed the deer. It means you find what they don't want to eat.

Until recently, Leavings operated Upstarts Growers Nursery, Lookingglass, Ore. For the past 10 years, she has tested countless plant varieties against her local deer herds. She has also shared test plants with friends and customers.

"It all started with a customer who had come to hate the deer she had loved when she first moved to the area," recalls Leavings. "We designed a large scale patch of different colors of lavender. She was my first distribution test of 'try it and let me know'. They left it alone, and she started adding other plants the deer wouldn't eat."

Leavings started a formal evaluation program for deer-proof plants. To make her list, a plant had to survive five years of different rain patterns and changing deer trails. She had found that both weather and changes in deer movement could cause deer to eat a plant they had previously left alone.



George Reisner uses pvc irrigation "drinkers" to provide blackberry vines with plenty of water.

Irrigation "Drinkers" Boost Blackberry Production

George Reisner, Jewett, Ill., gets great production from just a half dozen blackberry vines by planting them on one side of his manure pit, where the plants grow in well rotted, 2-ft. deep cow manure. He uses pvc irrigation "drinkers" to provide the plants with plenty of water.

The drinkers are lengths of 4-in. dia. pvc pipe, which he presses down into the manure. He uses a garden hose and wand to fill the drinkers with water, which slowly percolates down to the roots. The berries climb on livestock panel fencing that's tied to metal posts set in the ground.

"It's an easy, highly productive way to grow blackberries. I can easily pick two gal-

"You can move as little as half a mile, and deer in the two areas will eat differently," says Leavings. "I have one customer who plants hydrangea because her deer won't touch them but I can't keep them alive outside without a fence."

While a deer might take an occasional bite out of a deer-proof plant, Leavings required that they couldn't eat enough to kill the plant or alter its shape or purpose, such as eating all the flowers.

In addition to lavender, she is confident of rosemary, culinary sages, thyme and fennel and nearly 50 other varieties she will guarantee. She estimates she has a couple hundred that are showing promise, but have yet to complete their five-year test.

Although no longer operating her nursery, she continues her research on deer-proof plants. She plans to start a newsletter, share her list of deer-proof plants and create a network of people interested in identifying more.

"I really want to get people away from the war mentality," says Leavings.

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Motorized Hard Hats

When co-workers left an aluminum hard hat on John Lamb's tool box, they had no way of knowing it would get him started as a hard hat designer.

Lamb, a machinist at Columbus Machine Works in Columbus, Ohio, took the hard hat home and jazzed it up to wear to a NASCAR race. He added stickers and found a NASCAR toy that made noise. He took it apart and mounted it on the hat so that he could turn it on and make an engine revving sound or say things like, "Come 'n for fuel, boys."

That was 1998. Since then Lamb has patented his "Unique Hat Designs" and created three different styles. He says he can custom make hats with any theme customers want.

He used a yellow hard hat to make a hat for a local Deere dealer. The hard hat has five small toy tractors mounted on a propeller that spins.

His NASCAR hats include small cars and stickers and he's had four of them autographed by racers and race car owners.

His Ohio State Buckeye hard hat is popular with football fans. It includes football helmets and Brutus the Buckeye figures spinning around the Ohio State logo.

Lamb would like to find a manufacturer to make his unique hard hats. But for now he's making them himself in his home shop.

"I can stick about anything on the hats," Lamb says, and he invites people to contact him with ideas for customized hard hats. Lamb makes the metal parts that rotate and assembles everything securely on the hard hat. Power comes from a small 12-volt battery that slips into a pocket. Prices vary according to the design.



Ohio State Buckeye hard hat includes football helmets and Brutus the Buckeye figures spinning around the Ohio State logo.



John Deere hat features 5 small tractors.

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He Made His Own Beer-Tossing Fridge

If you ever wished you didn't have to get up from your comfy chair to get a can of pop or beer, you'll like John Cornwall's beer-tossing fridge.

A recent engineering graduate of Duke University, Cornwall's modified mini-fridge uses a remote control to launch cold, aluminum-canned drinks up to 10 ft. with perfect aim every time. It holds 10 cans in its magazine, with 14 more in reserve.

"It took me about 150 hours of fine tuning and \$400 in parts to build this unit," he says.

It's a 2-step process. One click of the remote activates a small elevator that lifts one can at a time through a hole in the top of the fridge and loads it into a catapult arm. A second click fires the can through the air.

The catapult can be angled to shoot cans to different parts of the room.

Cornwall says you need to gently cradle the can as you catch it in order to avoid a foam explosion when you open it.

"It works well. I launched a couple of 24-can cases for a party I had, with no problems."

An online video that shows the unit in action has been viewed by people more than 1,400,000 times. The copyrighted video is located on www.beerlauncher.com and has earned Cornwall more than \$7,000 in web advertising revenue.

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