

## LOOKING FOR COLORFUL, SEMI -SHADE TOLERANT PLANTS THAT DEER DON'T LIKE TO EAT?

Dr. Jerry Parsons

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When plants start growing, pests start "pestering". The easier to control pests such as spider mites, loopers, worms, aphids, and squash bugs are insignificant when compared to the truly destructive garden "beast-of-eat"—deer.

Much has been written and said about what the serious gardener can do to lessen the impact of deer in a landscape. This usually includes a list of plants which deer are not supposed to like. Some folks enduring huge populations of deer have found these writings and lists to be of little value when trying to put variety and beauty into a landscape.

Realizing that few plants have the ability to resist the munching of hungry deer, and fewer yet have the ability to thrive in semi-shade locations, you can imagine how very few plants can be described as shade-tolerant and deer-resistant.

Here are some recommendations. Photographs can be found at [www.PlantAnswers.com](http://www.PlantAnswers.com).

**Angel's Trumpet (*Brugmansia* syn. *Datura*)** A poisonous plant which deer find distasteful. Grows and blooms in semi-shaded areas. Night pollinating, it emits a wonderful scent at sundown and into the evening hours. Gets its name from the large, trumpet-shaped flowers and its *angelic* fragrance in the evening. Root-hardy, freezing to the ground most years but sprout again from its roots in the spring. They grow to be large shrubs and can be trained to grow as small trees. Prefer warm to hot climate and light, fertile, well-drained soil. Whitefly and red spider mite populations should be controlled as needed.

**Bush Morning Glory (*Ipomoea fistulosa* Mart. Ex Choisy)** In the sweetpotato family (*Ipomoea*). Shrub-like growth habit. Can grow in exceedingly dry places and can be considered a xeriscape plant. The most prolific of any of the summer perennials. Medium-size light pink or white blooms all summer. Blooms last only one day but clusters of blooms are formed in the axil of every leaf. Can reach 6-8 feet tall with multiple trunks. Root hardy during south central Texas freezes. Blooms best in direct sun (8-10 hours per day). Can be cut back monthly to encourage branching and increase blooming surface. Cutting back in July will reduce plant height and encourage a spectacular fall bloom.

**Four O'Clock (*Mirabilis jalapa*)** Flourishes in periods of severe drought and water restrictions. Blooms in less than full sunlight. Not a preferred plant by deer and rabbit, but can recover rapidly if damaged. Fragrant and one of the few hummingbird and butterfly plants for shady growing conditions. Long-lived tuberous perennial and reseeding annual. Trumpet-shaped flowers as large as 2 inches long open in the late afternoon and close the following morning, unless the day is cool, then some will stay open until new flowers open later.

**Gold Star Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*)** Heat and sun loving Texas native tropical with golden-yellow shaped flowers, blooming from late spring til frost in Zone 9. Full sun is best but will tolerate partial shade. Grows 3 to 4 feet as an annual. Can be planted in both containers and xeriscape landscapes. Seed pods should be removed when they appear to promote faster re-bloom. Outdoors, it is generally pest-free.

**Turk's Cap (*malvaviscus arboreus*)** Shade-tolerant Texas native with blooms hummingbirds love. Grows in sun or part sun to heights of 4 to 5 feet tall, forming a shrub-like perennial plant. Flowers from late spring through fall with bright red petals rolled loosely around the flowers' reproductive parts. It is a relative of the hibiscus and it's variegated green-and-white foliage stands out in shady areas where green color is sometimes lost. Often dies to the ground in winter, then comes back in the spring.

**Other Suggestions:** Dayflower, Fall Aster, Jacobina, Lamb's Ear, Mexican Oregano, Periwinkle, Vinca, Plumbago, Rosemary, Salvia, Sage, Shrimp Plant, Cross Vine, Carolina Jessamine Vine.