

DeerProofYourGarden

Commissioners Bendel, Silverman, Vuono, Brumfield and Fraasch
Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building
710 Washington Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15228

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to educate Mt. Lebanon residents about deer-proofing their gardens. I felt the media gave us great coverage; our workshops were well-attended and gardeners were anxious to get new insights; your Earth Day booth was very popular; and I learned a lot about your beautiful community.

It is admirable that as Commissioners of Mt. Lebanon, you sought out the underlying cause of the deer issues facing your community. It was my pleasure to help you identify the root of the problem, and I hope there is follow-through with my recommended solutions.

While touring troubled areas of Mt. Lebanon, I observed that there is moderate deer browse damage throughout many of the neighborhoods, while some locales showed less evidence of browse damage. Many residential gardens are lush with plant materials deer find irresistible. The municipalities' flower gardens and islands also feature deer-tasty plants. It's no wonder the deer residing in Mt. Lebanon, like suburbs throughout northeast United States, are extremely healthy!

My report is attached. As you can see, the primary focus is on deer-proofing, both municipal and residential gardens. I have had the opportunity to visit countless other communities while consulting on deer, which have similar problems and solutions to those confronting Mt. Lebanon. That said, I've also included in your report recommendations regarding deer-vehicle collisions, and Lyme Disease education.

Mt. Lebanon is fortunate to have a local expert on deer-resistant plants, Mrs. Lisa Jenkins with the Jim Jenkins Garden Center. I spoke with Lisa, and she indicated willingness to advise the municipality regarding what to plant in the 30 public flower islands and 22 public gardens. I encourage you to avail yourself of her expertise.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have, or if/when I can be of further assistance.

Thank you,

Sandy Baker
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Rochester, NY 14622

June 17, 2015

Enc.: 4

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DeerProofYourGarden

ENCLOSURES:

- 1- The Almanac, April 29-May5, 2015
PLEASE NOTE: front page, full color, lead article=*Priceless!*
- 2- Deer-Resistant Plants
Penn State Extension, and Deer-Licious Plants
- 3- Car/Deer Safety Begins With You
- 4- Invoice for Services

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Deer Report

Mt. Lebanon, PA

June 17, 2015

Synopsis:

As community leaders faced with the impact of deer damage to municipal properties and residential yards and gardens, the Commissioners of the municipality of Mt. Lebanon, PA, retained my services to consult on deer-proofing landscapes.

The assignment included touring troubled residential areas, parks, and a woodlot; visiting area businesses featuring gardening products; educating citizens who visited Mt. Lebanon's Earth Day booth; doing media interviews, presenting three workshops and one mini-workshop, and meeting with the Commissioners.

Summary findings:

Mt. Lebanon is unwittingly attracting deer into its municipality, and supporting deer population expansion, through extensive use of deer-friendly plantings both on residential and public property. The first step in reducing deer browse, thus deer population expansion, would be to stop planting materials that attract deer, which are things deer love to eat. For those who want to plant items considered to be "deer food," techniques can be employed that will protect plantings from deer.

Mt. Lebanon has 30 public flower islands and 22 public gardens, which, unfortunately, feature many plants deer love to eat (tulips, roses, etc.). Planting flowers and bushes that deer love to eat in the public flower islands and gardens attracts deer, bringing them onto roads, and causing deer-vehicle accidents. This is a serious safety hazard.

Using flowers and plants that deer don't like is a critical step to reducing deer-vehicle collisions. There are hundreds of plant species deer rarely eat, and that is what should be planted in the flower islands and public gardens.

It appears many/most Mt. Lebanon residents are undereducated or misinformed about gardening to discourage deer. The preponderance of plants deer love to eat in residential gardens suggests homeowners simply do not know what to plant, and/or how to protect against deer browse damage.

The municipality has the opportunity to launch a community-wide deer-resistant gardening strategy campaign. All residents would be invited, indeed encouraged to participate.

Community-wide deer-resistant gardening strategy campaign

1. Plant things deer do not like to eat. [*1,*2] The municipality of Mt. Lebanon should plant deer-resistant plants in the 30 public flower islands and 22 public gardens. Additionally, the city can create demonstration flower islands/beds featuring plant materials deer do not like. Such models would serve two purposes: 1- to discourage deer browse; and 2 - to educate residents about deer-resistant plants. If desired, the municipality could also demonstrate the proper use of repellents, cages made of fencing, etc., thus educating residents how to protect plants deer like to eat. [*3,*4,*5]
2. Launch a community-wide deer-resistant gardening campaign. Publicize and educate through the city web site, Mt. Lebanon Magazine, local media, posters, etc. Host deer-proofing workshops. Hold an annual deer resistant gardening tour with awards given to the most attractive deer-resistant garden. Make this challenge fun, and an activity in which the entire community can collaborate by working together and sharing information. Local garden stores could be encouraged to offer discounts on deer repellent products and to feature deer-resistant flowers/ornamentals, and to hold “deer days” when such discounts might be offered.
3. Enforce the current bird feeding ordinance (height of bird feeders). Bird feeders are deer feeders. Educate residents, explaining the reasons it is necessary, and why it needs to be enforced.
4. Enforce the deer feeding ban. Educate residents, via Mt. Lebanon Magazine and web site and a handout, explaining that feeding deer

attracts deer, as well as other wildlife (including rats) into the area. Deer have seasonal nutritional requirements which are best met by nature. Most deer feeders love the deer, and don't want to harm them, so most will comply. Of course, if they continue to feed the deer, they should be fined.

5. Expand the fence ordinances. Fencing policies should be reviewed and re-evaluated, ensuring homeowners' rights to protect their property, while at the same time maintaining aesthetics. A variety of fencing materials should be considered. New fencing policy should be adopted and enforced.

Reduce Deer-vehicle Collisions

There are many steps the municipality of Mt. Lebanon can take to reduce deer-vehicle collisions. Other communities, such as Austin, Texas, and Rochester Hills, Michigan, have experienced dramatic decreases in deer-vehicle collisions simply by implementing driver safety strategies. [6]

Mt. Lebanon campaign should include:

- A. Identifying deer hotspots. Track manually or through geographic information system based on police, DOT and public works department records. The accident collection system should be reviewed to ensure that details such as date, time, exact location, injury severity, and other relevant information are reported and deer road-crossing patterns are accurately characterized. The reporting system must also be robust enough to prevent double-counting.
- B. Reducing and enforcing the speed limit at deer crossing hotspots.
- C. Removing brush than encroaches on roadways which blocks driver sight-lines. Flag problem spots and approach/work cooperatively with landowners whose property borders major roadways to achieve this goal.
- D. Using moveable electronic signage (flashing, with words) [7] educating drivers about new signage, rut season, deer runways, etc. with changeable messages which, for example, alert drivers to time of day and season when

- they need to be most vigilant (ex: dawn, dusk, during rut, watchful for fawns following does in June-July, to be extra vigilant at collision hotspots, etc.) (
- E. Installing Strieter-Lite -- Deer and Wildlife Warning Highway Reflectors [*8] or similar deterrents, where applicable; and maintaining properly so they continue working
 - F. Implementing a Driver Awareness Safety Education Campaign, publicizing defensive driving techniques, deer patterns, how when one deer crosses the road others will follow, etc. Reference: Rochester Hills, MI
 - G. Replacing standard deer crossing signs with moveable, changeable electronic signage, because people habituate to standard signs

Lyme Disease Education

Mt. Lebanon residents appear to be under-educated or misinformed about Lyme Disease. Up-to-date information on Lyme Disease prevention, symptoms and treatment, and pet protection could be included on the city's web site, and in an article(s) in Mt. Lebanon Magazine. The CDC is an excellent resource for this purpose. [*9]

Wildlife Education Resource

A wildlife educational resource link could be placed on Mt. Lebanon's website that would give residents access to information on resolving conflicts with deer and other wildlife typically found in the area, in addition to a list of local resources for wildlife deterring products. Good example: www.wildlifeline.org [*10]

I highly recommend that the coordinator (below) seek out opportunities to guest lecture at the local schools (elementary to high school) on the topic of how to resolve wildlife conflicts, and how kids can help.

Assign a Coordinator

A staff member who will be responsible for making sure that all of the initiatives move forward and are carried out should be assigned as the coordinator. He/she would report directly to the manager.

Conclusion:

The Commissioners of Mt. Lebanon wisely sought to understand the underlying cause of the deer issue, and they now have the unique opportunity to remedy the situation while healing and unifying the community.

The first and most important step will be to stop attracting deer from neighboring communities, and stop feeding deer with municipal and residential plants. In addition to educating residents on how to deer-proof their gardens, Mt. Lebanon should implement programs to reduce deer-vehicle collisions, educate residents about Lyme Disease, and provide a resource link for related issues.

If and when the aforementioned recommendations are successfully implemented, Mt. Lebanon should see a major reduction in deer-human conflicts, including landscape browse and deer-vehicle collisions.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mt. Lebanon Report, Recommended Resources

Sandy Baker, Consultant

June 17, 2015

*1 Recommended: List of Plants Deer Don't Like to Eat, Pennsylvania:

PENN STATE Extension

Deer-Resistant Plants Flower Garden Plants & Some Choice Woody Plants

<http://extension.psu.edu/plants/master-gardener/counties/pike/publications/list-of-deer-resistance-plants>

*2 Recommended: Plants-for-Sale, Deer Don't Like to Eat:

DEER-LEERIOUS PLANTS

Plants That Deer Don't Like to Eat

<http://www.perennialfarm.com/whatdowegrow/deerleeriousplants.html>

*3 Recommended: Repellents:

Ropel - <http://www.nixalite.com/ropel.aspx>

Liquid Fence - <http://www.liquidfence.com/>

Deer Defeat - <http://www.deerdefeat.com/>

*4 Recommended: Deterrent:

ScareCrow Motion-Activated Animal Deterrent - <https://www.contech-inc.com/products/home-and-garden-products/animal-repellents/scarecrow-motion-activated-animal-deterrent>

*5 Recommended: Fencing to Build Cages:

Welded Wire - PVC (Green) Vinyl Coated Welded Wire Fencing

<http://www.weldedwirefence.com/>

*6 Recommended: Deer-Vehicle Reduction Campaign

Model Community: Rochester Hills, MI

<https://www.rochesterhills.org/>

*7 Recommended: Portable Electronic Highway Signs/Message Boards

Highway Specialties

<http://www.highwayspecialties.com/electronic.html>

*8 Recommended: Deer and Wildlife Warning Highway Reflectors:

STRIETER-LITE reflectors

<http://www.strieter-lite.com/>

*9 Recommended: Lyme Disease Education Resource:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/lyme/>

*10 Recommended: Wildlife Hotline:

Urban Wildlife

www.wildlifeline.org