Deer have been a problem all along for landscapes, but more so in recent years with increased deer populations, even in urban areas, partly from decreased predators and laws in some communities protecting wildlife. Although no system will totally work all the time, some are more effective than others. Much of the effectiveness depends on the size of the deer population, availability of other and preferred food sources and the system itself. These and other factors explain why a repellent may work well at one site and not at another, or a perennial is attractive at one site and not another.

Least effective are perhaps taste and smell repellents, making plants smell or taste objectionable. If deer are hungry enough, or prefer a certain plant, these objections are easily overcome. However, they are the least expensive methods and so a good starting point. They can be purchased from many feed stores and suppliers. Also falling into this category, and having received some study are soaps. It appears the more odor from the soap (such as those found in finer hotels), the more objectionable to deer. These may be purchased from hotel supply firms or wholesale grocers and food clubs. Large bars can then be cut into quarters. Soap should be hung in original wrappers or cloth bags in order to help keep from dissolving too fast. They should be hung about every 10 feet from plants, stakes, fences or similar aboveground objects. Soap dissolving on branches may attract voles. Human hair from hair salons is also reputed to work as a repellent as are predator urines.

Moderately effective are noise deterrents, if used properly. Deer quickly become used to stationery objects and sounds and so if ultrasonic or similar sound emitters or radios are used, they should be rotated frequently. Mixed results have been reported with the often expensive ultrasonic units. If radios are used they should be tuned to all night talk shows, as human voices are more effective than music, and don't have to be very loud to be effective. Radios may also be placed on timers to go on and off periodically throughout the night. A small instrument shelter, doghouse or equivalent can be used to protect radios in the field from the elements. Outdoor speakers might also be installed, which can double in the day for music for employees and announcements. Louder noises such as the sound canons used in orchards can also be useful, if they don't disturb neighbors as well or violate local noise ordinances.

More effective are the physical deterrents such as fences. A high fence (8 to 10 feet) is perhaps best but also most expensive. Less expensive is a double or triple strand electric fence. Place strands about 2 to 3 feet off the ground, and about 4 feet apart. The deer often refuse to jump both. Best is a triple system, with the two strands as above and another in between but about 5 to 6 feet. This forms a fairly impenetrable triangle, and while not too high for deer to jump, they can't clear all strands once the width is also considered. Some have found good luck with only one strand of electric wire which is baited with peanut butter. This latter system is perhaps cheapest (as low as $2 per linear foot) of the more effective physical deterrents. Monofilament fishing line may also be strung between 10 ft. posts, strands about 2 ft. apart with streamers tied to them so the deer will see them (they do not see well and may knock down the lines otherwise). If guns or bow and arrows are used, be sure and follow all safety precautions, local ordinances and state laws concerning hunting. Poison baits are not recommended as in addition to often being considered inhumane are often illegal and easily work into the food chain killing predator animals as well.

Deer resistant perennials-- those they generally don't eat-- may be used or placed in more sensitive areas such as along property boundaries. Even these may be eaten if deer are under severe pressure and stress for food.

Deer "resistant" perennials.
Acanthus mollis..................................Bear's Breeches
Achillea..........................................Yarrow
Ajuga............................................Bugleweed
Allium............................................Ornamental Onion, Chives
Alyssum saxatile..............................Basket of Gold
Amsonia tabernaemontana..................Blue Stars
Anemone.........................................Windflower
Angelica..........................................Angelica
Artemisia..........................................Senecio
Aruncus dioicus.................................Wormwood
Asclepias tuberosa..............................Butterfly Weed
Astilbe............................................Plume Flower
Athyrium nipponicum 'Pictum'.............Japanese Painted Fern
Baptisia..........................................False Indigo
Begonia x tuberhybrida.......................Tuberous Begonia
Bergenia..........................................Heartleaf Saxifrage
Boltonia asteroides............................False Aster
Buddleia davidii.................................Butterflybush
Calamagrostis.................................Heather Reed Grass
Calluna..........................................Heather
Campanula......................................Bellflower
Canna............................................Canna
Carex elata.....................................Sedge
Centaurea........................................Cornflower
Ceratostigma plumbaginoides..............Plumbago
Chelone..........................................Turtlehead
Cimicifuga racemosa.........................Bugbane
Convallaria majalis............................Lily-of-the-Valley
Coreopsis........................................Tickseed
Cynara cardunculus............................Thistle
Dennstaedtia punctilobula...................Hay-scented Fern
Dianthus..........................................Sweet William, Pinks
Dicentra exima.................................Bleeding Heart
Dictamus albus.................................Gas Plant
Digitalis purpurea.............................Foxglove
Dryopteris........................................Wood Fern
Echinacea.........................................Coneflower
Echinops ritro.................................Globe Thistle
Erica.............................................Heath
Eschscholzia californica....................California Poppy
Eupatorium......................................Joe-Pye Weed
Euphorbia.........................................Spurge
Festuca glauca.................................Blue Fescue
Filipendula......................................Meadowsweet
Fritillaria imperialis.........................Crown Imperial
Gaillardia x grandiflora.....................Blanket Flower
Geum.............................................Avens
Gypsophila paniculata.......................Baby's Breath
Helleborus......................................Lenten Rose
Heuchera.........................................Coral Bells
Iberis sempervirens.........................Candytuft
Imperata cylindrica 'Red Baron'..........Red Baron Grass
Iris...............................................Iris
Kirengeshoma palmata.......................Kirengeshoma
Knautia macedonica...........................Scabiosa
Lavandula......................................Lavender
Leucanthemum..................................Painted, Shasta Daisy
Liatris............................................Blazing Star
Lilium lancifolium..............................Tiger Lily
Limonium latifolium...........................Statice
Linaria..........................................Toadflax
Linum perenne.................................Perennial Blue Flax
Lythrum..........................................Purple Loosestrife
Matteuccia struthiopteris...................Ostrich Fern
Mentha............................................Mint
Miscanthus sinensis..........................Maiden Grass
Mitchella repens...............................Partridgeberry
Monarda didyma.................................Bee Balm
Myosotis scorpiodes.........................Forget-me-not
Myrrhis odorata...............................Sweet Cicely
Narcissus.......................................Daffodil
Nepeta...........................................Catmint
Oenothera.......................................Sundrops, Evening Primrose
Onoclea sensibilis............................Sensitive Fern
Origanum........................................Oregano
Osmunda cinnamomea..........................Osmunda Fern
Osmunda claytonia.............................Interrupted Fern
Osmunda regalis...............................Royal Fern
Paeonia..........................................Pony
Panicum virgatum..............................Switch Grass
Papaver orientale..............................Oriental Poppy
Pennisetum......................................Fountain Grass
Phalaris arundinacea..........................Ribbon Grass
Phlox divaricata...............................Woodland Phlox
Phlox paniculata..............................Garden Phlox
Physostegia virginiana.......................Obedient Plant
Platycodon grandiflorus....................Balloon Flower
Polemonium caeruleum.......................Jacob's Ladder
Polygala acrostichoides.....................Christmas Fern
Potentilla........................................Cinquefoil
Primula..........................................Primula
Prunella vulgaris..............................Heal All
Pulmonaria......................................Lungwort
Ranunculus.....................................Buttercup
Rheum...........................................Rhubarb
Rosmarinus officinalis......................Rosemary
Rudbeckia.......................................Black-eyed Susan
Salvia...........................................Sage
Saponaria.......................................Soapwort
Scilla...........................................Squill
Solidago........................................Goldenrod
Stachys byzantina............................Lamb's Ear
Tanacetum.......................................Tansy
Thelypteris noveboracensis...............New York Fern
Verbascum........................................Mullein
Verbena..........................................Vervain
Veronica..........................................Speedwell
Vinca...........................................Periwinkle
Viola labradorica.............................Labrador Violet
Yucca...........................................Yucca