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GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

*For man, autumn is a time of harvest,
Of gathering together,
For Nature, it is a time of sowing,
Of scattering abroad.*

Edwin Way Teale

When I visited my daughter recently in her new home in the country, she was concerned about being unable to establish a garden; landscaping had become a major problem. She proceeded to take me around the property to exhibit the cause of the problem. Deer tracts were noticeably visible. I had some solutions to offer her. There are quite a few safe remedies available. By safe I mean treatments that contain no toxic chemicals.

There are homemade concoctions of such things as garlic, hot peppers and vinegar that can be sprayed about, but this requires frequent applications. There are also commercial sprays on the market that are natural and somewhat effective. They produce unpleasant odors and tastes that drive off deer. There are also mesh barriers that can be attached to trees or posts.

We finally agreed upon the use of a deer-proof garden flower mix. This mix contains seeds of flowers that do not appeal to deer. Among these flowers are Foxglove, Sweet Alyssum, Lupines, White Yarrow, Coreopsis, Gloriosa Daisy, and Blue Sage, just to name a few. There are at least a dozen others, as well as some attractive ground covers like Lily of the Valley, Pachysandra and Periwinkle that can be used. This was a solution that would also enhance the beauty of the landscape. Some people today use electric fences to shock the deer, but that idea did not appeal to my daughter at all.

We know that the 18th-century citizens often chose fences. Thomas Jefferson had a ten foot high paled fence around his kitchen garden to protect it from rabbits and deer. Of course, in the cities like Williamsburg, a fence was required within six months after you built your house on your lot.

Deer meat was eaten by the Indians as well as the colonists. Indians roasted deer on spits. Not only was it roasted, but it was used as a convenience food. After being dried in the sun, it was packed in sacks made of hide. This was called Pemmican, from the Cree language which means fat or grease. Venison was also cut into strips, dried, and then eaten when traveling, similar to what is known today as jerky.

Nicholas Cresswell's journal of 1775 mentions that one of his company shot a deer in the Ohio Valley and Landon Carter in October of 1770 wrote in his own sarcastic way that his son managed to shoot at and miss from only twenty steps away two large bucks that were standing close together. He referred to the event as remarkable!

William Byrd in September 1709 wrote in his diary, "The whole company eat their venison without any other sauce than a keen appetite."

At the Governor's Palace in 1769, William Sparrow listed venison among the other foods in Lord Botetourt's palace kitchen in December and we can also find receipts for doe-venison in Hannah Glasse's Art of Cookery.

There is a custom that was begun here in Virginia in 1646 by the Mattaponi Tribe. The tribe annually pays tribute to the governor of Virginia with the presentation of a deer, or turkey or fish at Thanksgiving. This American celebration of Thanksgiving is over 350 years old.

As I count my many blessings this year, I include among them the reuniting of the Historic Trades Department, making us once again a family.

Happy Thanksgiving

Janet Guthrie

