



SOUND
NATIVE
PLANTS

Plant protectors

No one wants their plants eaten down to little nubs by critters, smothered by grass, or killed by a weed whacker. Here are measures that may help:

Browse protection

The only sure-fire way to exclude most wildlife is to build a fence, a fence ten feet tall to exclude deer, buried several inches deep to exclude rodents, and covered at the top to exclude geese. Since fencing is impractical for most projects, we usually rely on other measures. Choose species not favored by resident fauna and/or over-plant to allow for some losses. Also try spraying Big Game Repellent (BGR brand) on the leaves a few times during the growing season; that product was recommended to us by a wildlife biologist as the most effective repellent and we have had good success with it at the nursery.

Tree shelters can protect the base of your plants from browse, but deer may shear off the growth above the shelter. Tree shelters also provide partial protection from rodents, mostly by making your plantings look less like plants. Rodents can get inside shelters if they want and you may end up with a few nests next to your plantings, but overall rodent damage will probably be reduced.

Tree shelters

Tree shelters are plastic cylinders that surround newly installed plants. Along with some browse protection (see above), they offer other benefits, especially where competing vegetation is present.

Tree shelters are highly visible and stay with plantings much longer than pieces of flagging, aiding relocation. This visibility is helpful during maintenance mowing or weed-whacking and the shelter allows you to mow right up to plants without damaging them. Shelters constrict sideways movement of plants, stimulating quick vertical growth. Tree shelters also act as small greenhouses, increasing light and humidity inside; this usually speeds growth of the plant, but may cause overheating on very dry, sunny sites.

Less expensive tree shelters are shipped as sheets, assembled on site, and then put over the plants. When assembled, most are only about 4 inches in diameter, so combine two or more sheets for bushy plants. Plastic netting tubes ("vexar") are cheaper still, but are too small to use on anything but seedlings. Correct installation is critical: shelters must be securely attached to firmly driven stakes with no gaps between the base of the shelters and the ground.

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