

# A Rabbit-proof Garden

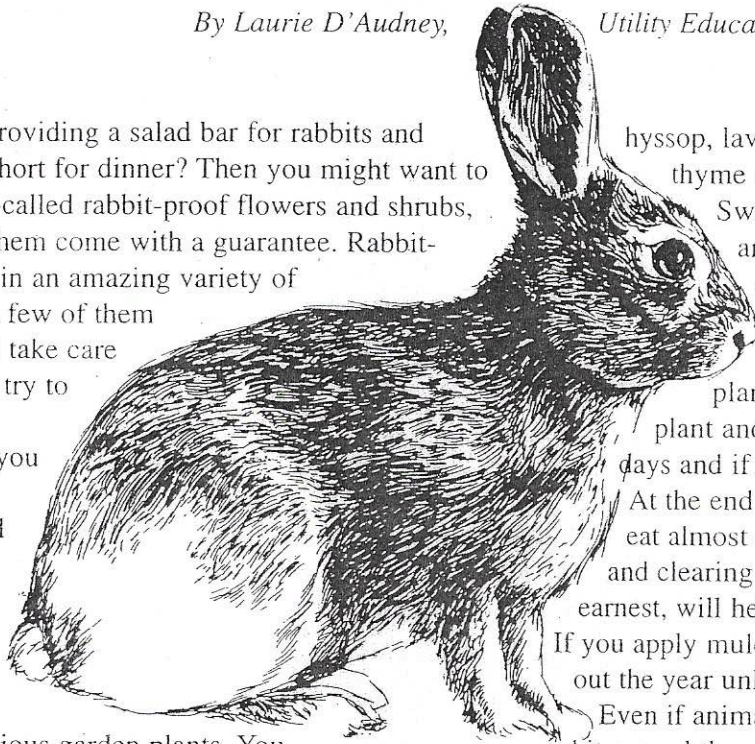
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Is your garden providing a salad bar for rabbits and leaving you a bit short for dinner? Then you might want to try some of the so-called rabbit-proof flowers and shrubs, although none of them come with a guarantee. Rabbit-proof plants come in an amazing variety of sizes and colors. A few of them are toxic plants, so take care that children don't try to eat them.

If you're brave, you can try planting a wall or ring around your garden of plants that rabbits like. Hopefully, they will fill their bellies before they consume your precious garden plants. You must be fearless to do this because it may encourage rabbits to explore beyond the wall.

Many herbs, sweet smelling plants and natives seem to be rabbit-proof. Herbs in particular keep rabbits away, probably due to their odor. Sage, tarragon, chives, garlic,



hyssop, lavender, mint, lemon balm, oregano and thyme don't hold much appeal to rabbits.

Sweet smelling plants, such as honeysuckle and lilacs, survive beautifully. A variety of natives and other low water-using plants also fit the bill. But before you run out and buy a few of a certain plant, you might want to test it. Buy a test plant and place it in the ground. Wait a couple days and if it hasn't been eaten, it's probably safe. At the end of winter, rabbits are ravenous and will eat almost anything. Waiting to prune old growth and clearing plant debris until spring has arrived in earnest, will help keep rabbits from eating new shoots. If you apply mulch, it can remain on the ground throughout the year unless nesting insects become a problem. Even if animals dig through the debris and nibble a bit around the plant bases, the spring growth spurt is usually so strong that plants will outgrow any damage. Are there any plants that rabbits never touch? Most are nibbled at one time or another. Test some of these plants in your garden.

Apache plume - *fallugia paradoxa*  
Autumn joy sedum - *sedum telephium*  
Big sage - *artemisia tridentata*  
Blanket flower - *gaillardia grandiflora*  
Blue mist spirea - *caryopteris clandonensis*  
Butterfly bush - *buddleia davidii*  
Columbine - *aquilegia*  
Dragon's blood sedum - *sedum spurium*  
Foxglove - *digitalis*  
Garden sage - *salvia officianalis*  
Gloriosa daisy - *rudbeckia hirta*  
Hyssop - *hyssopus officinalis*  
Juniper - *juniperous spp.*  
Lavender - *lavandula*  
Lavender cotton - *santolina chamaecyparissus*

Lilac - *syringa spp.*  
Oregano - *origanum spp.*  
Penstemon - *penstemon spp.*  
Prairie zinnia - *zinnia grandiflora*  
Rubber rabbitbrush - *chrysothamnus nauseosus*  
Russian sage - *perovskia atriplicifolia*  
Thyme - *thymus spp.*  
Virginia creeper - *parthenocissus quinquefolia*  
Woolly yarrow - *achillea tomentosa*  
Yucca - *yucca spp.*

Information was taken from Daryl Black's article, Rabbit Proof Gardening, from the Fall 1994 issue of Rocky Mountain Gardener.