



BETTER HEDGES DETER DEER

Choose deer and drought-resistant hedging

Sigrie Kendrick - Nov 23, 2022 / 11:00 am



Photo: Contributed

Deer just love cedar hedges, which also require a lot of water in the hot Okanagan summer. Avoid both problems by planting alternative hedging materials.

Deer, deer everywhere. Wow, does the deer population of the valley seem to have exploded recently.

With the sudden early snow limiting grazing options for them in the wild, many deer seem to be munching on anything they can get their teeth into in the valley bottom.

I see many homeowners resorting to wrapping their *Thuja occidentalis*, commonly known as Eastern or Northern white cedar, hedges with burlap, netting, or snow fencing in an attempt to fend off these hungry grazers.

What a hassle. It's not pretty and it doesn't always work.

Even though I personally enjoyed our recent warm fall weather, I was concerned about the implications for our watersheds and now that the data is available—with good reason.

According to meteorologist data, October saw only six mm of precipitation compared to a normal of 29.2 mm. The average temperature was 12.1 C compared to a normal of 7.3 C.

Those are shocking statistics. We know our climate is warming and changing, so why are we continuing to choose unsustainable hedging options such as cedars which are not drought-tolerant and are also fodder for deer?

Why aren't we making better choices?

Thuja occidentalis is native to Eastern North America where it prefers moist soil and is intolerant of drought.

(Just for clarification I use the common name cedar which should not be confused with the genus *Cedrus*, true cedars.)

Many gardens are planted with these Eastern white cedars, but perhaps our choices indicate a lack of knowledge about botany, or perhaps we're just not considering how wasteful it is to plant such thirsty trees in the arid Okanagan.

It's easy to educate yourself about better choices in the Okanagan's dry climate. Just pay a visit to our website at www.okanaganxeriscape.org to learn about more-appropriate hedging options that are better suited to our semi-arid valley.

Our website features a blog called On the Dry Side, which discusses all things xeriscape, including the issues with the thirsty *Thuja occidentalis*. There are lots of alternative hedging possibilities, with both native and non-native options discussed. Also, visit our demonstration garden at 4075 Gordon Drive in Kelowna to see some of these hedging options in person.

Our extensive plant database on the website represents a wealth of knowledge, with 26 search categories available, including deer resistance. Let us help you do away with the onerous task of wrapping up your cedar hedge every fall, and wasting gallons of precious water on it every hot, dry Okanagan summer.

If you find our database useful, please consider supporting our non-profit organization by becoming a member of the Okanagan Xeriscape Association. Membership makes a thoughtful holiday gift for any of the gardeners in your life and has many benefits, as outlined on our website.

Follow us on social media for inspiration on the sustainable beauty that is xeriscape.

The Okanagan Xeriscape Association is extremely grateful for the ongoing financial support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is proud to be collaborating with them on its Make Water Work campaign.

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