

Deer-Exclosure Plant Cages



Early in 2013, I planted a **woodland garden**. But every night, my garden was decimated by my local population of **white-tailed deer** *Odocoileus virginianus*. Yummy, I guess!

My nemeses' natural predators **wolves** *Canis lupus* and **cougars** *Puma concolor* were extirpated from my region 100 years ago (they are returning, but not expected until 2040 or so). And local hunters are insufficient to keep them in check. So I was forced to defend my plants myself. I could have tried **deer repellent**, but locals told me of them **not working**, or requiring an **application schedule** stricter than I could handle, so I decided to use **mechanical means**.



After much trial-and-error, this is what I found works.



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Contents

Deer-Exclosure Plant Cages.....	1
1 Tools List	2
2 Parts List.....	2
3 Assembly Instructions.....	2
4 Installation.....	3
5 Maintenance.....	3

- **TODO:** add some pics of the new design!
- **TODO:** complete this doc.

1 Tools List

- **tin snips** or heavy-duty **wire cutters**,
- **pliers**,
- **safety glasses**,
- **gloves**,
- **close-toed** shoes.

2 Parts List

In the fencing section of your local hardware store, buy:

- [Req] Protective-cylinder:
Containment fence or **welded-wire fence**, *vinyl-coated* (for long life), color = *dark green* or *black* (for minimum visibility), mesh size = $2'' \times 3''$ ($5\text{cm} \times 7.6\text{cm}$) is fine, $\frac{1}{2}'' \times \frac{1}{2}''$ ($1\text{cm} \times 1\text{cm}$) will work but is much more work.



A roll **48" x 50' (1.2m x 15m)** works for large plants. Can use shorter for small plants, but allow for growth!

- [Opt] Top: **Chicken wire** (also vinyl-coated in dark green or black) (more work, but adds structural integrity) or **plastic bird fabric** (easier but less sturdy) (plus get ~~thick black thread~~ or ~~twine~~ to sew it on). Get **enough to cover** what you designed above.
- [Opt] Small clamps (the kind you use for paper reports OK).
- [Req] Hold-downs, so deer cannot push it over:
Stakes or **landscaping staples**, 6" (15cm) or so.
Get about **4 per cage**.

3 Assembly Instructions

- Decide how big you need your deer-exclosure plant cage to be. Leave room for the plant to grow!
- Make the protective-cylinder:
 - **Cut** your **containment fence** or **welded-wire fence** above, using your **tin snips** or heavy-duty **wire cutters**.
 - **Roll** it into a **protective-cylinder**. Actually, for larger cages, it doesn't have to be a cylinder—I made one that is kinda kidney-bean shaped. And for a plant growing right up against a tree stump, I made a cage that looks something like a car!
 - **Connect** the cylinder edges together by cutting off the side-wire on one side, then bending the now-free points of wire around their mates on the other sides, using your pliers. ~~Or sew it on with your thick black thread or twine.~~
 - If **not tall enough**, you can make two cylinders, and **stack** them, cutting off the top-wire on one cylinder, then bending the now-free points of wire around their mates on the other cylinder. I have even started leaving the excess sticking outward, and an additional deterrent! ~~Or sew it on with your thick black thread or twine.~~

- If you make it tall enough and thin enough, you don't need a top:
 - Faster to make.
 - The plant can grow through it.
 - Doesn't collect debris nor snow.
- If you want a top (and the structural integrity it adds):
 - Cut some **chicken wire** above a bit too big for the top, using your **tin snips** or heavy-duty **wire cutters**.
 - If you like, you can hold it down to the protective-cylinder using small clamps (the kind you use for paper reports OK).
 - Then bend the excess around your existing protective-cylinder, using a gloved hand (easier) or pliers (if needed). ~~If you are using **plastic bird fabric**, sew it on with your **thick black thread** or **twine**.~~

4 Installation

- Place the deer enclosure cage you over your plant.
- **Stake down** the perimeter with **landscaping staples**.
 - **4** equally placed around the perimeter seem to be adequate.
 - If you want, you can cut off the **bottom-wire** on the bottom-cylinder, leaving the now-free points of wire to help hold down the cage!

5 Maintenance

Plant cages above need very little maintenance as such. However:

- When **mowing**, you can mow up to the cage, then flip it over onto the mowed side, and when done, restore it.
 - For the largest cages, I can flip it over, but need help from my spouse to get it back over the plant!
- If the plant you are protecting is **dormant** in the winter, you can either **store** your cage in a garage or shed, or **leave up year-round**.
 - Plastic fabric tops may break with heavy wet snowfall.
 - Snow is no problem for open- or wire-tops.

Experiment! Let us know what works for **you**—and what doesn't! We hope this helps you deal with your deer problem!

-30- [send comments to the author](#)