

## **Oh Deer!**

### **Protecting Fruit Trees In Winter**

Now that fall has arrived it's time to think about protecting your fruit trees from winter wildlife browsing. Browsing can quickly strip away young shoots and buds that are critical for tree growth and fruit production. As more development occurs in the valley, the loss of traditional winter foraging areas for elk, deer and our resident moose have forced them to become backyard foragers. Although its impractical to protect all trees and shrubs, picking out the ones that are the most valuable may be worth the effort. Trees under 20 feet are the most vulnerable to browsing damage which can result in significant growth loss and fruit reduction in the fall.

Among the various options, fencing is probably the most effective if you only have a few individual young trees to protect. Set three or four metal T-posts into the ground around your tree and wrap with metal or plastic mesh fencing. To extend the height, attach PVC pipe or small diameter wooden landscape posts to the T-posts. The mesh fencing can then be wired or stapled to the upright posts. You can check out the Wood River Land Trust orchard at Colorado Gulch for an example of how to fence off a larger area. For smaller trees and shrubs under 10 feet hardware cloth or chicken wire affixed to garden or wood lath stakes can be used to protect them.

If fencing is not an option, other methods such as noise makers, spinners or flags blowing in the wind may help. You can also try scented repellants including commercial deterrents and Irish Spring soap hung on the twigs or scattered soap shavings around the base. However, wildlife can quickly become habituated to these methods. The bottom line is trying to distract the animals and to keep them moving past your favorite trees.

For more information or assistance contact a certified arborist or [emily.williams@haileycityhall.org](mailto:emily.williams@haileycityhall.org) to receive more information.