

Photo: Jerry Ting



Photo: TIMBER

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# Living with Deer in the East Bay Regional Park District



## Deer Safety

Deer are powerful, large, and wild animals. They will defend themselves vigorously when threatened. Never feed or approach a deer, even if it seems tame. If a deer becomes trapped in your yard or caught in a fence, call your local animal control office or California Department of Fish and Wildlife for help with rescue or removal. When walking with a dog in open spaces, keep your dog under control at all times.

**A black-tailed buck**  
 Coyote Hills Regional Park, Fremont

Photo: Jerry Ting

## Visitor Centers

- Ardenwood Historic Farm**, Fremont  
510-544-2797, awvisit@ebparks.org
- Big Break Regional Shoreline**, Oakley  
Big Break Visitor Center at the Delta  
510-544-3050, bigbreakvisit@ebparks.org
- Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve**, Antioch  
510-544-2750, bdvisit@ebparks.org
- Coyote Hills Regional Park**, Fremont  
510-544-3220, chvisit@ebparks.org
- Crown Memorial State Beach**, Alameda  
Crab Cove Visitor Center and Aquarium  
510-544-3187, ccove@ebparks.org
- Del Valle Regional Park**, Livermore  
510-544-3146, svisit@ebparks.org
- Garin/Dry Creek Pioneer Regional Parks**, Hayward  
510-544-3220 (Coyote Hills), chvisit@ebparks.org  
Open summer weekends
- Sunol-Ohlone Regional Wilderness**, Sunol  
510-544-3249, svisit@ebparks.org  
Open weekends only
- Tilden Regional Park**, Berkeley  
Botanic Garden: 510-544-3169, bgarden@ebparks.org  
Tilden Nature Area/Environmental Education Center  
510-544-2233, tnarea@ebparks.org



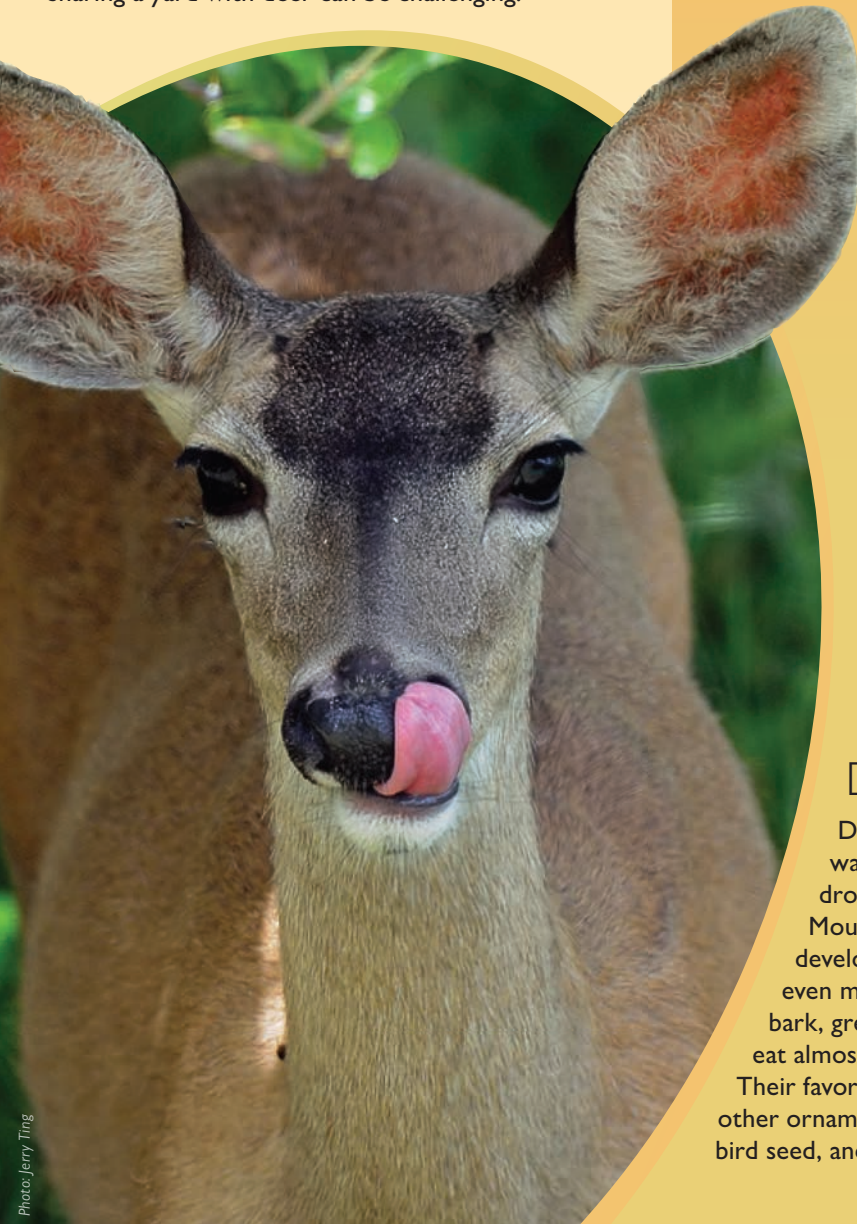
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**On the cover: A black-tailed deer**  
 Photo: Jerry Ting



## Black-tailed Deer

**B**lack-tailed deer can smell danger half a mile away and detect water two feet underground. When frightened, they can spring 15 feet forward, clearing obstacles over 10 feet high in a single bound. While seeing deer in a park is often delightful, sharing a yard with deer can be challenging.



### Deer in the Wild

Deer in the East Bay are Columbian black-tailed deer, *Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*, a subspecies of mule deer whose range extends from Northern California into British Columbia. Their bounding (or “stotting”) ability helps them survive. In steep and uneven terrain, they sail over gaps that predators cannot cross and easily clear obstacles a predator will need to get over, under, or around.



Stotting

### Deer in Yards

Deer may visit gardens in search of food, water, and safety. In dry seasons and drought, nutritious food is difficult to find. Mountain lions, their primary predator, avoid developed areas — which make leafy gardens even more appealing. While deer enjoy leaves, bark, green stems, and fresh grasses, they will eat almost any plant when options are limited. Their favorite backyard foods include roses and other ornamental plants, flowers, vegetables, fruit, bird seed, and even pet food.



Deer in an Oakland garden

### Protect Plants

A deer who stops to eat at your garden can harm your plants and may eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. To discourage deer from choosing your yard:

#### Build a Fence

While costly, this is the only reliable way to exclude deer. Your fence should be six to eight feet high, depending on surrounding slope and vegetation. Deer use long-established routes to get from place to place. If you leave a portion of your yard free from fencing, deer can continue to pass. As an alternative to installing fencing around your yard, you can guard individual plants or areas (fruit trees, vegetable gardens, rose beds, etc.) by enclosing them in deer-resistant structures.

#### Choose Deer-Resistant Plants

While there is no such thing as a deer-proof plant, some plants are more attractive than others. Any plant is likely to appeal to deer when it is young and newly planted. Seek advice from your local nursery or read *A Gardener's Guide to Preventing Deer Damage* from California Department of Fish and Wildlife, which is available for free online. It also includes advice on fencing.



A deer enjoying oak leaves

#### Use Repellent

Buy a commercial deer repellent or make your own by mixing one egg into one liter of water. The smell of rotten eggs continues to repel deer, with their keen sense of smell, long after humans can no longer detect it. Some people add garlic, cayenne, and/or milk to make a stronger smell, which may also repel smaller animals. Strain the mixture and pour into a spray bottle. Spray every part of plants you want deer to avoid (bark, leaves, flowers, fruits). Reapply on new growth and after rains or heavy dew.

#### Deer Form Habits Based on Experience

Apply repellent early in the growing season, and reapply often, to discourage deer from beginning (or continuing) to view your yard as a good place to eat.

#### Combine Methods

A combination of techniques will generally be most effective. Use repellents on deer-resistant plants. Grow a variety of species that may be less popular with deer. Experiment with different kinds of repellents and different types of enclosures for trees and vegetable gardens.