DEER EXCLOSURE DESIGN RESOURCES FOR FORESTS

The deer exclosure design outlined here is cost effective, quick to install, and easy to maintain and repair. We think it is one of the best designs currently available for forest exclosures.

SITING

If you are interested in installing a deer exclosure in a forest setting, try to site it in an area with intact native understory biodiversity. Areas that still contain trilliums, orchids or other native spring ephemerals or native understory shrubs are the ideal place to start. Enclosing areas with intact native biodiversity will allow local genetics to spread within your exclosure. Don't worry if you can't find such an area or if you don't see much regeneration of native understory plants—historic land use and decades of deer abundance have eliminated many sensitive understory species and the native seed bank in many places. However, a deer exclosure offers the opportunity for active restoration of native understory biodiversity. Just be sure to source bare root plants to avoid introducing Asian jumping worms! You can expect tree regeneration to flourish without much assistance.

MATERIAL AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

This exclosure design uses heavy duty plastic fence suspended from monofilament support wire. The wire is supported on existing trees by a single coated decking screw. This eliminates the need for costly, labor-intensive fence post installation, and minimizes disturbance to the area. Plastic fence is also much easier and simpler to repair and maintain than wire fence. The fence material we recommend has a 15–20-year life.

Many fence designs rely on eye screws driven directly into trees. This presents a problem as trees grow into and around the eye screw, as it is impossible to back the eye screw out as the tree grows once the monofilament support is run through the eye. This can happen in as little as 5 years. This design is different, however, and relies on a single 3″ coated decking screw to hold the support wire. As the tree grows, simply back out the screw with no disturbance to the fence or the tree. If a tree or branch falls on the fence, the screw will bend or break without compromising the fence. Simply straighten the screw, or drive in a new one, and place the fence back on the protruding part of the screw.

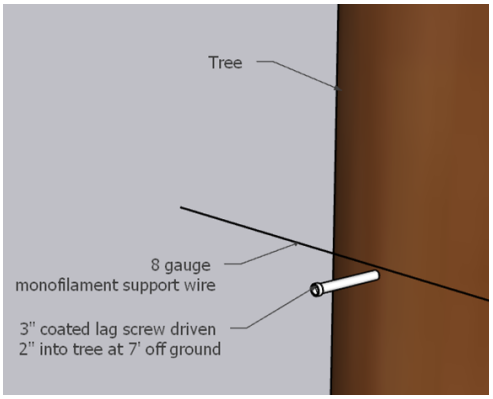
INSTALLATION

First determine the perimeter of the area you wish to exclude from deer. Near-circular exclosure shapes are the most efficient use of material and provide continual tension to hold the support wire on the screw and tight to the tree (see schematic below). Screw the decking screw into the trees at 7′ height (use a 7′ stick as a guide) with a tree spacing of ~20-40′. Be sure to locate the screw on the outside of the trees, facing away from the area to be enclosed. When driving screws into trees, leave a 1–1.5″ gap between the tree and the face of the screwhead to allow for tree growth and a place for the monofilament wire to sit. Check the screws annually and back them out as needed, usually beginning after the first 2–5 years.

After screw installation, you will run the support wire. We recommend using 8-gauge monofilament support wire from Deerbusters (see resources). Deerbusters also sells the tensioning tools needed to tension the wire, and it also provides instructional videos on how to use them. Finally, after the wire is run and tensioned, you will attach the fence to the support wire (~every 2′) using 'Hog Rings' along with a tool called a 'Hog Ringer.' Approximately 8–12″ of the fence should lay on the ground in an L-shape facing outwards to prevent deer from forcing their way underneath. In places where the bottom of the fence is not laying flat, simply use downed sticks or branches to help hold it in place. Once the fence is installed, it should be monitored monthly for damage and repaired as necessary. Larger exclosures require more frequent monitoring.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- **Fence:** Trident Extruded Extra Strength with Reinforced Bottom Edge (Deerbusters). The 8′ tall option is a good balance between cost ($430/330′), strength (750lb breaking strength), and useful life (15–20+ years).
- 8 gauge monofilament support wire offered by Deerbusters.
- Tensioning tools offered by Deerbusters. Includes hog ringer and hog rings for attaching fence to the support wire.
- **Screws:** Use coated or stainless 3″ decking screws.



Materials and tools needed for a 330′ perimeter exclosure (does not include 3″ screws or drill/driver).

Deer Busters

EASY & SECURE CHECKOUT

YOUR CART (8 ITEMS)

ITEM		PRICE	QUANTITY	SUBTOTAL
	**Gripple For Monofilament 8 ga**	$2.05	− 4 +	$8.20
	**8' x 330' Extra Strength with Reinforced Bottom Edge**	$429.95	− 1 +	$429.95
	**333' Monofilament Black 8 ga 1,200lb**	$42.95	− 1 +	$42.95
	**9/16" Hog Ringer with 1,000 9/16" Hog Rings**	$96.95	− 1 +	$96.95
	**Gripple Tightening Tool**	$79.95	− 1 +	$79.95

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW FOR STEP-BY-STEP DEER EXCLOSURE BUILDING VIDEO TUTORIAL

Or search "A Step-By-Step Guide to Building a Deer Exclosure" on the Partners for Climate Action Hudson Valley YouTube channel (youtube.com/@partnersforclimateactionhv)

PARTNERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION HUDSON VALLEY

THE WILD TRUST