



# The Buck Stops Here

By Richard and Susan Eyre

**W**e planted our first crop of conifers during the drought of 1988. The following winter the deer damage was extensive. The *Pinus strobus*, *Thuja occidentalis* and *Picea abies* 'Cupressina' were the hardest hit. We think they used the *Pinus sylvestris* as breath mints. Chub Harper observed the devastation and urged us to try a single strand wire electric fence for our second winter.

Our system is a low cost electric deer fence consisting of 4' steel posts (15' apart) connected by a wire charged with pulses of high voltage at very low current. The wire is baited with peanut butter on aluminum paddles hung along the wire. Deer love peanut butter and after they take one lick-the buck stops here! It is effective because the system is low in maintenance, low in cost and removable during the summer months. The fence is low and pets can move freely underneath. With appropriate gates installed along the walking path, humans have little risk of a shocking experience. Since we instituted the electric deer fence, deer damage has been reduced 95%.

The current cost of the system from our local farm supply store is:

- Control runner box (hooks up directly to 110 volts) ..... \$45.00-55.00
- Steel posts (4') ..... @ \$1.69 each
- Insulators to attach wire to posts- 25/bag ..... \$3.00-4.00
- Wire (1/4 mile roll) ..... \$11.99
- Ground rod (1) ..... \$9.00
- Aluminum paddles (2.5"x 4.5") ..... \$.10-.25 each

It is important to check the fence for effectiveness and keep baiting the paddles with peanut butter. Also check for shorts in the wire. Downed branches from storms or heavy snowfall need to be removed to keep the fence on line. Whitetails prefer Skippy! (Just joking, generic peanut butter works well). By the way, the deer pruned *Pinus sylvestris* 'Fastigiata' have filled in quite nicely since the deer don't chow down on a regular basis. The following list from The American Nurseryman on what the white tailed deer love the most.

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***Picea abies*** 'Pumila'