

WHITETAIL New



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Remembering **CHARLES J. ALSHEIMER**

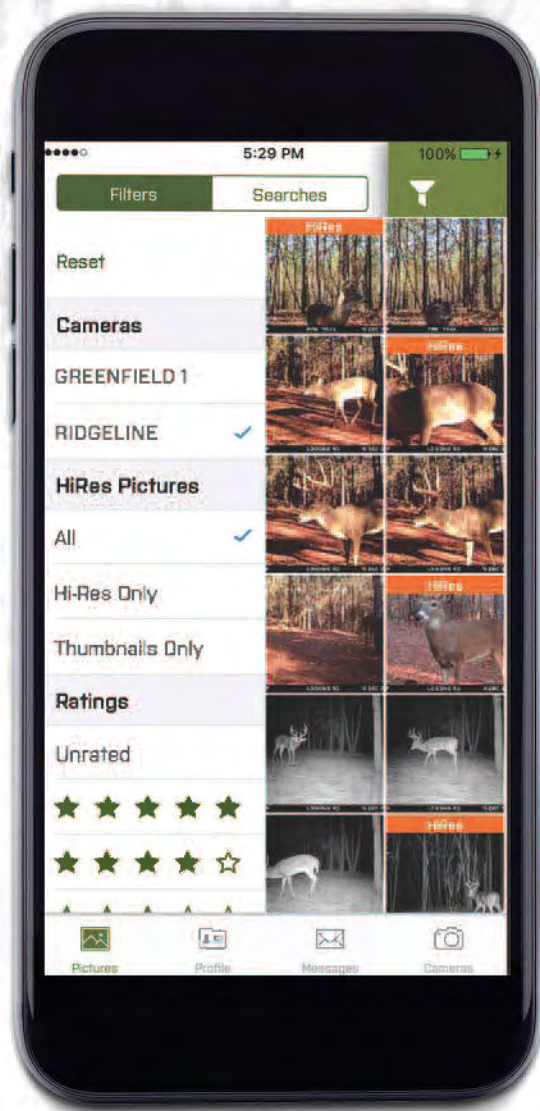
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Stories On Page 5 and 56



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In This Issue...

Features

- 5 Paying Homage to the Man Behind the Lens: Charles J. Alsheimer**
By R.G. Bernier
- 8 Happy 30th Anniversary to the Food Plot Industry**
By Jon Cooner
- 12 Do Deer Minerals Really Work?**
By Matt Harper
Is your deer mineral a glorified bag of salt or does it provide your deer's diet with high-quality nutrition?
- 18 Maximize Magic Summer Solstice Growth**
By Charles J. Alsheimer
A buck's ability to grow great antlers hinges on four factors — genetics, management, age and habitat.
- 24 Entry and Exit Strategies**
By Scott Bestul
Don't spook feeding whitetails. Here are some strategies that can help.
- 28 Impossible to be the Best and the Cheapest**
By Hollis Ayres

- 36 How to Scout Overlooked Food Plot Sites**
By J. Wayne Fears
- 40 Meet the Weed Master – Dr. Carroll Johnson**
- 44 Imperial Clover – The No. 1 Choice for Turkeys as Well as Whitetails**
By Brian Lovett
- 52 Imperial Whitetail PowerPlant: Make the Most of Limited Antler-Growing Time**
By Jon Cooner, Institute Director of Special Projects
- 54 Don't Cut Corners with Perennial Forage Maintenance**
By Jon Cooner, Institute Director of Special Projects
- 56 Mentors and Memories: Saying Farewell to Two of My Favorite People**
By Steve Scott
- 58 Patience, Purpose and Provenance: Turning Disappointment into Dreams**
By Kristopher M. Klemick
- 62 Lime – The Difference Between Success and Failure**
By Whitetail Institute Staff

64 Celebrate the Fusion

By Scott Bestul
Imperial Whitetail Fusion is a blend of the newest Imperial Whitetail Clover and the Whitetail Institute's WINA-100 chicory. This is a great choice for soils that hold moisture.

70 Telling Today's Stories for Tomorrow

By Kristopher M. Klemick

Departments

4 Message from Ray Scott

34 Customers do the Talking

Stories and Photos

42 Record Book Bucks

Stories and Photos

48 The Weed Doctor

By W. Carroll Johnson III, PhD, Weed Scientist and Agronomist

49 Food Plot Planting Dates

68 First Deer – The Future of Our Sport



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A Message from **RAY SCOTT**

Founder and President of the Whitetail Institute of North America

Farewell to a Whitetail Legend

Charlie's profound faith in God – a faith he loved to share – and his passionate prompting of stewardship was at the core of his outdoor career and I personally believe his ultimate mission on this earth.

A new year is always a special time – a unique moment of both beginnings and endings. So it is as the Whitetail Institute begins its 30th anniversary year it also mourns the loss of a dear friend and a legend in the whitetail world.

I'm talking about Charles Alsheimer who passed away December 30 on the cusp of the new year. As a noted author, lecturer, naturalist, photographer and lover of all things whitetail, his influence on hunting and deer management is hard to overstate — particularly as an early pioneer in Quality Deer Management where we shared so much common ground.

In addition, he was great friends with the Institute both professionally and personally. My son Steve in particular cherished his relationship with Mr. Charlie who over the years became an extraordinarily positive mentor and source of wisdom in all areas of his life. Steve's heartfelt tribute to Charlie and another dear family friend and mentor John Nichols is on page 56. For me, Steve's experiences with these special men reminds us how a love of the outdoors and hunting and fishing in particular bring people together in uplifting and powerful ways.

I know whenever Charlie's articles crossed my desk I always settled in for a thoughtful, informative and inspirational read accompanied by the magnificent photos he was famous for. And I was always left with a deep desire to be a better steward of the won-

derful natural resources the Good Lord bestowed on us all.

Charlie's profound faith in God — a faith he loved to share — and his passionate prompting of stewardship was at the core of his outdoor career and I personally believe his ultimate mission on this earth.

Legendary deerstalker and writer/photographer R.G. Bernier also shares his own heartfelt tribute to Charlie on page 5 sharing an up-close-and-personal biographical insight into the remarkable man who was Charles Alsheimer.

Now you might think with all the accolades and honors Charlie accrued he would be rightfully prideful. But to the contrary he was as humble and down to earth as they come, spreading his gospel of stewardship, gratitude and love of the Lord to churches, schools, seminars, hunting clubs and wherever potential whitetail lovers might be.

So as we bid farewell to a great friend, we are left to honor and cherish the great legacy he left for so many. We are grateful for his presence on this earth and in our lives.

Farewell Good Friend,


Ray Scott



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Paying Homage to the Man Behind the Lens

Charles J. Alsheimer

“Realize your deer hunting experiences amount to far more than a rack on the wall or meat in the freezer. Racks and meat vanish in a moment, but the lessons learned will last a lifetime.” — Charles J. Alsheimer

By **R.G. Bernier**



As we climbed the steep grade at an altitude approaching 10,000 feet, my friend Charlie paused to check on the little guy following in his footsteps. He chidingly remarked, “I thought you were in shape Bernier, what do I have to do, carry you up the mountain?”

Standing there, nearly on top of the world in the Alberta Rockies, I was gasping for breath and wondering at the same time, “how can a guy twelve years my senior be making this ascent with what seemed like little effort?”

Ultimately, the intense climb led to the experience of a lifetime photographing big horn rams amidst a backdrop of awe inspiring beauty. I remember telling Charlie as we sat enjoying the view, “Heaven has got to be incredible if this beauty is any indication.” I then inquired, “How do you even capture this with a camera?” Charlie’s response, “You don’t, you just enjoy it.”

We returned to the bottom of the mountain later in the day incredibly grateful for the opportunity that God had graciously granted us. Shooting alongside Charlie was always a great chance to further my education in the craft of nature photography. Little did I realize he would show me something far more important on the trip back to town.

Upon rounding a bend in the road, a traffic jam came into view. Vacated vehicles were lined up along both sides of the highway. At least fifty photographers with long lenses were congregated in an open meadow. Charlie pulled off to the side of the road, jumped out, grabbed his camera and tripod and exclaimed, “Let’s see what this is all about!”

Despite feeling tired, I reluctantly followed him from a distance. ‘The boys of autumn’ were out in force, photographing a big bull elk, which was making every attempt to breed a cow. And now, even after the physically demanding day that we’d already spent, there was Charlie right in the thick of it, competing for position with men half his age.

I didn’t take any photos as I sat there watching. Instead, I

smiled inwardly and marveled at my friend as he scurried about to position himself for the next series of shots. With his cap turned backward and a grin on his face, he tenaciously pursued this elk as if this was his first experience.

Reflecting upon that day and many other experiences shared with Charlie it is bittersweet. My heart is sad! Tears track a path down my cheeks as those memories are now all I have.

Of course, I knew that this day would eventually come, I just didn’t think it would be this soon. William Wallace, the great Scottish poet once wrote, “Every man dies. Not every man really lives.” Charlie was one that lived life to the fullest as you are about to learn.

At least once in each person’s life there comes along an individual who can personify an image as well as an influence upon you of magnetic force. Rare is the circumstance when that same character has the ability to impact an entire generation with equivalent magnetism.

In the past forty years, Charles J. Alsheimer has provided the deer hunter and naturalist alike with vivid whitetail imagery, insight into deer behavior, and intimate personal testimony about his own life. We, the huntsmen, have been the beneficial recipients of this man’s tireless efforts. His accomplishments certainly have not gone unnoticed. In January 2000, *Deer & Deer Hunting Magazine’s* readership voted Charlie as the third most inspirational personality from the 1900’s. Here I present to you the man behind the lens.

The Journey

Growing up on a farm in rural New York provided Charlie with the backdrop of a life filled with nature and the whitetail. In fact, as a young man it was the vision of a graceful buck bounding across a plowed field on that very estate that fueled his passion for the animal. The one key ingredient that sets all successful huntsmen apart from the rest of the pack — be it Rutledge, Tome, Perry, Browning, or Alsheimer — is this, intimately knowing and understanding the animal. “My desire to

know everything about whitetails became far more important than hunting tactics. The more I learned, the more I kept coming back to one thought: The whitetail deer is far more than an animal made of skin, bones and antlers.”

Charlie has never been one to follow the well-worn path traversed by his predecessors choosing rather to blaze his own trail through virgin territory. In 1979, he walked away from a very lucrative career in corporate America in order to chase a dream, full-time outdoor photography and writing.

The Cutting Edge

Traveling throughout the country to photograph whitetails provided Charlie with the images he needed but the constant interaction with the animal was missing. To remedy this situation, Charlie did what no other photographer has done before; he built his own 35-acre research facility on the Alsheimer farm. Although initially established in order to photograph in and around, quickly this arena became a vehicle in which Charlie could study whitetail behavior under a variety of circumstances and conditions.

One of the many key benefits to the deer hunting community derived through this effort has been the lunar-based rut cycle project. Along with Wayne Laroche, a former Vermont biologist, Charlie has uncovered a hidden mystery of how the moon influences and affects deer movements. Why was this important to him and what significance does it hold for us? Here is Alsheimer’s explanation: “There is no question in my mind that the rutting moon has a significant influence on the North’s rut, and that includes everything from rubbing to scraping to fighting to chasing to breeding. The combination of all of these things is what gives the hunter an advantage during those magical days.”

The Images

The old saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” certainly is an apt representation of Charlie’s magnificent photos. He has shared with the world images depicting whitetail behavior rarely observed by most of the hunting fraternity. To accomplish this feat has meant an investment of money, time, self-discipline, and love for his subject matter.

Camera equipment is not cheap, especially when you’re purchasing top-shelf tools. Always remember, the camera doesn’t define the photographer, it only enhances what he does. Charlie quickly points this out, “When I began photographing whitetails, I didn’t have a clue about what I was doing and learned as I progressed. During those early years, I was more intent on just getting deer in the frame than thinking about composition, lighting, or depth of field. These aspects of photography take time to develop.”

Not only has photographing whitetails given Charlie a ringside view of this grand animal’s behavior, but has taught him how to approach, get in close, and form a tolerance-bond between him and the deer. Better understanding the whitetail’s demeanor under a variety of circumstances has enhanced Charlie’s hunting prowess, which in turn, has enabled him to harvest some outstanding bucks throughout North America.

The Man

One simple word could aptly be used to definitively describe Charlie Alsheimer the man — unselfish. In the neurotic world we all live in today, particularly within the highly competitive whitetail industry, Charlie has taken no shortcuts, never behaved unethically nor compromised his integrity.

Throughout his career, Charlie has generously shared his photos, knowledge about the whitetail, and remarkably, provided us a look inside his personal life without reserving any hidden untold secrets for himself. What that has accomplished for deer hunters across the country is a greater understanding of the animal they pursue without the investment of time and energy to gain that insight. His thirst for answers to the whitetail puzzle becomes unending as he writes:

“I still love to hunt, but during the past ten years my focus has changed from the hunt and the kill to understanding the whitetail’s many mysteries. This quest for knowledge has taken me down many side roads and, for the most part, all have been fascinating. Some have turned out to be dead-ends, and some just faded into the forest.”

Pat Durkin, former editor of *Deer & Deer Hunting Magazine* asked this question, “What makes Alsheimer so exceptional in the highly competitive world of whitetail deer writing and photography?” He goes on to answer by stating, “In short, many people are excellent hunters, many are excellent writers or photographers, and many are astute students of the whitetail’s habits and habitat. Few, however, can combine those specialties and bring them to sharp focus for other deer hunters to appreciate and learn from. In that regard, Charlie Alsheimer is in a class by himself.”

His Faith

The crown jewel of Charlie’s many gifts was his ability to communicate effectively into the hearts of those who packed his speaking engagements. And although whitetails were his platform, it was his own personal testimony that he shared following his program that spoke into the lives of countless thousands.

Charlie’s message of personal redemption was always at the very core of what and who he was. He shared the gospel message with the hope that all that came to hear would ultimately make the same decision he made back in 1971 and place their faith and trust in Christ. As a result of what God had done in his life he wrote:

“Now that I know God personally through believing in Jesus Christ, I realize God deserves all the credit for my dreams coming true. Since my conversion, Proverbs 3:5-6 have been my life verses — ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.’

Only through Christ will you find peace in your heart, fulfillment in life, and know for sure you are going to heaven.”

The Rewards

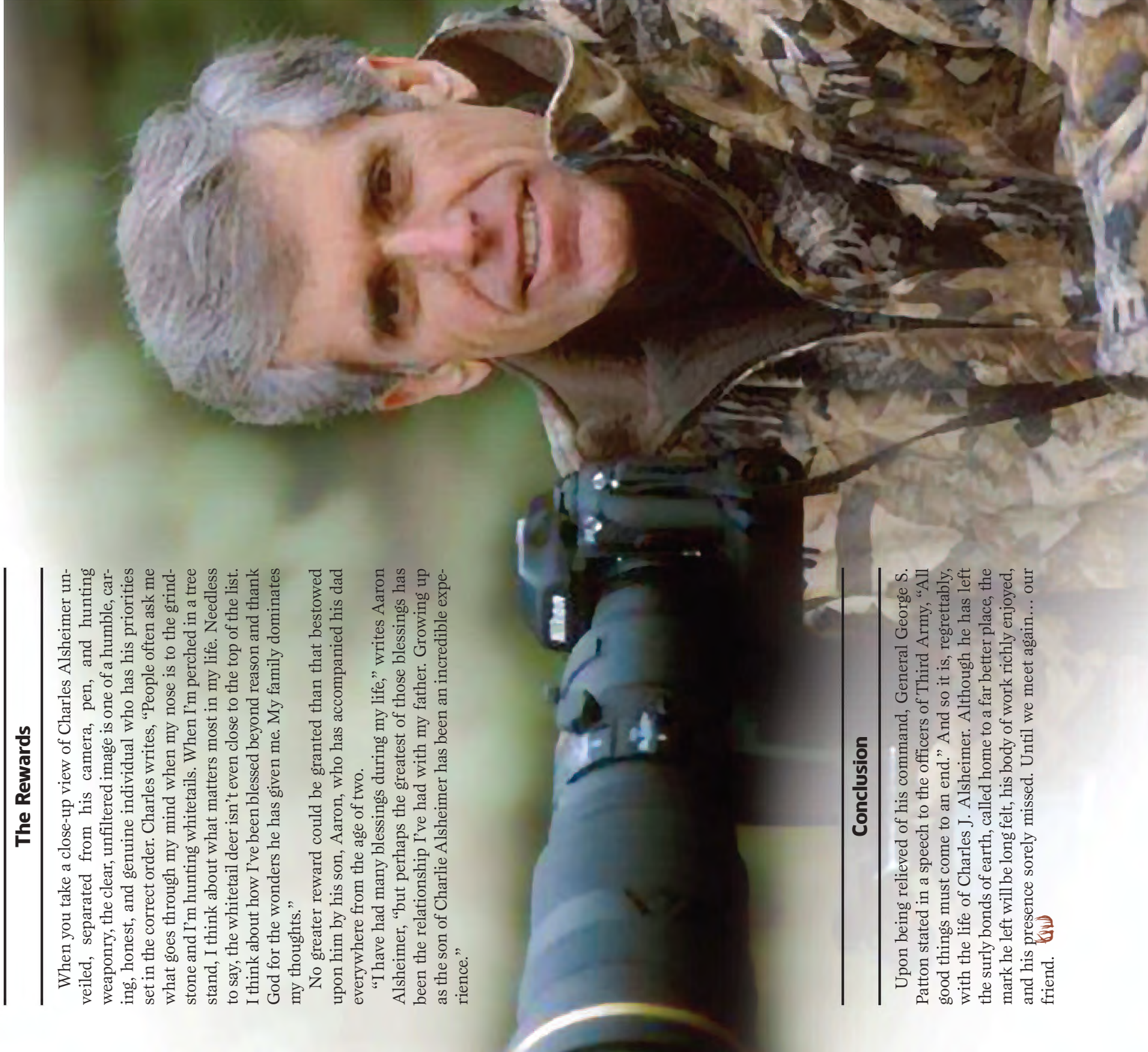
When you take a close-up view of Charles Alsheimer unveiled, separated from his camera, pen, and hunting weaponry, the clear, unfiltered image is one of a humble, caring, honest, and genuine individual who has his priorities set in the correct order. Charles writes, "People often ask me what goes through my mind when my nose is to the grindstone and I'm hunting whitetails. When I'm perched in a tree stand, I think about what matters most in my life. Needless to say, the whitetail deer isn't even close to the top of the list. I think about how I've been blessed beyond reason and thank God for the wonders he has given me. My family dominates my thoughts."

No greater reward could be granted than that bestowed upon him by his son, Aaron, who has accompanied his dad everywhere from the age of two.

"I have had many blessings during my life," writes Aaron Alsheimer, "but perhaps the greatest of those blessings has been the relationship I've had with my father. Growing up as the son of Charlie Alsheimer has been an incredible experience."

Conclusion

Upon being relieved of his command, General George S. Patton stated in a speech to the officers of Third Army, "All good things must come to an end." And so it is, regrettably, with the life of Charles J. Alsheimer. Although he has left the surly bonds of earth, called home to a far better place, the mark he left will be long felt, his body of work richly enjoyed, and his presence sorely missed. Until we meet again... our friend. 🙏



Happy 30th Anniversary To The Food Plot Industry

By Jon Cooner

Whitetail Institute Director of Special Projects

1988! It's hard to imagine that 30 years have passed since Ray Scott founded the Whitetail Institute and started the food plot revolution in North America. As the Quality Deer Management Association wrote in their book, *Quality Food Plots*, "The birth of the nationwide commercial food plot industry unquestionably began in 1988 with the launch of Imperial Whitetail Clover by the Whitetail Institute." As hunters, wildlife managers and stewards, we owe a huge debt of thanks to Ray for his role in helping generate the tremendous improvement in the number and quality of whitetail deer and hunter-success rates in North America we enjoy today. His vision has helped lead the way in improving deer hunting all across the country and has helped hundreds of thousands of hunters go from being just hunters to being deer and land managers as well.

By 1988, Ray Scott was already well known to most outdoorsmen as the founder of B.A.S.S., Bassmasters. In that capacity, Ray is the person due the most credit for popularizing bass fishing and tournaments turning them into a multibillion-dollar industry. Ray is also a lifelong deer hunter who has hunted all across North America in addition to managing his home property in Alabama for hunting. In 1988, he combined his passion for deer hunting with his knowledge and experience in business, and the result was the Whitetail Institute of North America. And now, 30 years later, hunters are still reaping the benefits.

For his part in breaking ground for two new outdoor industries Scott has been called a visionary and a pioneer. While he admits his strengths are in ideas and promotion, he gives most of the credit for his success to his unique ability for finding good people who can turn his visions into reality.

When Ray discovered — quite by chance — a new clover that was highly preferred by deer, he tracked down the scientist who had developed the new variety. It was Dr. Wiley Johnson, an agronomist and professor at Ray's alma mater Auburn University.

After looking into Dr. Johnson's credentials and after discovering he was a world-renowned plant scientist, Ray contacted Dr. Johnson and convinced him to join in the newly formed Whitetail Institute of North America as its first Director of Forage Research and further develop its first ground-breaking product Imperial Whitetail Clover.

Over the years until his death in 2006, Dr. Johnson continued to develop new clover varieties specifically to exhibit the attractiveness, high nutritional content, and other characteristics specifically important for use in food plots for deer. Dr. Wayne Hanna, also a world-renowned scientist and a member of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Research Hall of Fame, took over the reins after Dr. Johnson passed away. These men helped Whitetail Institute get started and have led the way in not only helping start the food plot revolution but have helped keep the Whitetail Institute as the leader in the industry. Many accolades for Whitetail Institute have come from all over the country like when the NRA's *North American Hunter* called the Whitetail Institute of North America "the pre-eminent supplier of wildlife seed products that help hunters attract and grow healthier deer."

The first full-time employee Ray hired was William Cousins and today William is the Operations Manager for Whitetail Institute and is incredibly knowledgeable about all things food plot related and a heck of a hunter too.

Imperial Whitetail Clover was the product that started a wholesale change in the way we hunt and manage deer. Imperial Whitetail Clover has been improved many times over the years as the Whitetail Institute has developed new, superior clover varieties, each time making Imperial Whitetail Clover even better than it was before. The Whitetail Institute's Research and Development Department has also developed a wide range of other food plot products as well as real mineral/vitamin supplements, nutritional supplements, feed, herbicides, and deer attractants.

And to think it all goes back to the introduction of a single food plot product, the original Imperial Whitetail Clover, 30 years ago. How things have changed (and for the better)!

As business grew during those early years, the Whitetail Institute's small staff couldn't handle the volume





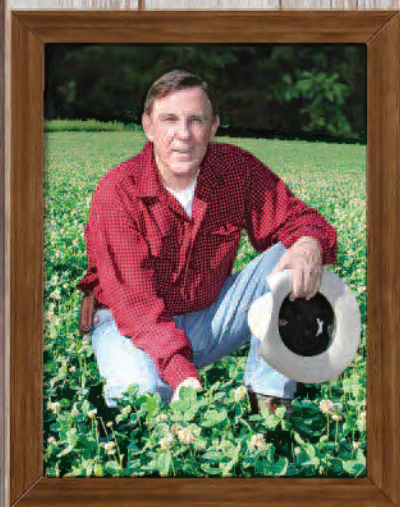
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of business and requests for information, and by 1990, Ray knew that it was make-or-break time; the Institute could grow or stand still. To the great benefit of hunters and managers everywhere, it chose the latter course, and Ray invited his sons, Wilson and Steve Scott, to invest and work in the Institute. Both were avid outdoorsmen and had business degrees and years of hands-on business experience under their belts. Fortunately for Scott, they were ready, willing and able to step up to the plate, and Wilson and Steve remain Vice Presidents of the Whitetail Institute to this day.

The Whitetail Institute's Business Philosophy

From the very outset, the Whitetail Institute has maintained a unified understanding that started with Ray Scott: "Follow the Golden Rule!" Ray explained, "There is only one way to build a business that will be successful and continue to grow over the long term," Scott said. "You have to provide the best quality products in the industry, and back them up with superb customer service. Once a customer honors you with his business, you owe it to him to give him his money's worth. But if you want him to come back again and again, you've got to do more than that — you've got to give him the support he needs. Some customers need very little help. Others need a lot and will call the Whitetail Institute again and again with questions. You have to treat each one the same. You have to give each one full service every time he calls. If your products are the best available, and if you are there to help him when he needs you, every time he needs you,

and you give him your best every time, he'll be back again and again." This philosophy is just as evident today as it was 30 years ago in everything the Whitetail Institute does.

Ray also recalls that it became evident early on that hunters weren't just looking for information about Imperial Whitetail Clover. As use of Imperial Clover spread across North America, it became increasingly obvious to Scott that hunters were literally starving for nutrition and management information about deer, and that education would be critical to help them grow bigger and better deer and to improve their hunting experience. Although they are critical for hunting success Ray knew that food plots are just one part of the puzzle. One step the Whitetail Institute took to fill the need for management information was creating *Whitetail News*, the original journal of the whitetail and wildlife farmer, the first issue of which was first published in 1991.

It's hard not to smile when comparing those early issues to today's *Whitetail News*. The first issue of *Whitetail News* was an annual publication and 12 pages long. Although the information contained in



those early issues was solid, it was also rudimentary compared to the information provided in current issues. And there's a good reason why: today's hunters and managers are far more highly educated about what it takes to grow bigger and better deer. Today, *Whitetail News* is published three times a year and averages 72 pages. In its pages, the Institute educates hunters and wildlife managers, not only about Whitetail Institute products but also about a wide array of deer nutrition and deer and land management topics. The Whitetail Institute also provides quick, personalized advice through a toll-free customer help line staffed by highly knowledgeable consultants. In hiring those first consultants, the Institute had three over-riding criteria in its hiring requirements that remain to this day: Whitetail Institute consultants must be avid deer hunters, eager to learn about the Whitetail Institute's products and follow the Golden Rule — to treat customers the way they would want to be treated.

Providing hunter/managers with immediate human contact along with providing the best products have kept the Institute in its position as the industry leader. By making the extra effort to provide a source of free information to the public, the Institute realized an unanticipated benefit. It got something extra in return: the Institute discovered another Research and Development Department: its own customers and field testers.

Over the years the Whitetail Institute has received letters and calls from hundreds if not thousands of people across the country that say

they enjoy the process of managing their land and food plots as much as the hunting itself. These folks along with everyone that plants food plots should be extremely proud of what they are part of. This group of people invest their money, their time and effort and all the wildlife that live on the property benefit from these efforts. Many Whitetail Institute field testers call it a Labor of Love.

The Future

As the NRA's *American Hunter* wrote, "To meet the whitetail's need for protein, some seed companies have developed high-protein clovers and mixtures geared especially for wildlife. At the forefront of this research is the Whitetail Institute." As the Whitetail Institute of North America enters its fourth decade of service, you can rest assured that its original business philosophy will remain intact. Whitetail Institute will continue to invest heavily in the research and development required to continually improve existing products and developing new products. Whitetail Institute will continue to provide *Whitetail News* free to its customers and fill it with the most up-to-date deer nutrition and deer management information available. And as *Whitetail News* readers have likely recognized, the stable of professionals who write for *Whitetail News* is second to none. You can count on that continuing as well.

Keep your eyes open for some exciting new products coming in the near future and as always, if you have any questions call us at 800-688-3030. 🦌

Iwould guess that most of you reading this magazine have been to a hunting, fishing or outdoors trade show at least once. Many of you have probably been to several, and why not? These shows are filled with cool things that hunters get giddy over. I was a frequent patron of hunting shows, spending at least a day of my weekend wandering the vast aisles, visiting with people selling everything from squirrel skinners to African safaris. But most of my trade-show days were spent as a booth jockey rather than a consumer.

The drill went like this: Arrive one or two days before the show started, set up the booth, and then spend three to nine days standing on concrete for 12 or more hours. After the show, we would break down the booth and pack up only to do it again the next weekend. As glamorous as that might sound, living the trade-show roadie lifestyle can be tiring.

The most enjoyable part of working those events was the chance to talk with folks who shared my passion for deer hunting. I was there, of course, to sell product, but most of my time was spent answering questions, many of which were intelligent and well-thought-out. But there were also questions that... well, they say there are no dumb questions, but I'm not sure I would agree with that.

For example: "I put 50 pounds of fertilizer on my 10-by-10-foot test plot, so why is it not growing?" Or, "I sowed some of that 30-06 Mineral Supplement, why is nothing growing yet?" But my favorite, and one that I got nearly every show, was, "Does that stuff really work?" I remember I was asked that at the end of a long and exhausting show.

Do Deer Minerals Really Work?

By Matt Harper

Photos by the Author



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All I could muster for a reply was, “No, not really, but I’m starving to death, and concession food is expensive, so I would appreciate it if you bought some anyway.”

Nuking your soil with 50 pounds of fertilizer on 100 square feet and then questioning why nothing is growing or wondering if mineral will grow out of the ground are nearly unanswerable questions, but I get why people ask, “Does that stuff really work?” First, we live in an age of hyper-marketing, with products making seemingly impossible claims, and often, those claims are hugely exaggerated. Consumers naturally take the expected stance of buyer-beware.

The validity of mineral supplements is regularly questioned. With outrageous claims such as, “Bring big bucks in for miles,” or, “Grow massive antlers,” marketers would lead you to believe that you should fear for your life from the stampede of Booner-sized bucks descending upon a new mineral site. But when you don’t see bucks coming from miles away, and the first buck you see at your mineral site is a spiker, you begin to question whether the product works. But it’s not just marketing that has created a sense of skepticism. Rather, there are several contributing issues. First, most people do not understand what nutritional role mineral plays in overall deer health. Additionally, people question why deer cannot meet their need for mineral naturally. There is also confusion about the difference between an attractant and a true mineral supplement. Finally, conducting empirical mineral requirement research on wild free-ranging deer is expensive and complicated — if not close to impossible.

Minerals Defined

Sensibly, you must have at least a general knowledge of what minerals do nutritionally before tackling anything related to mineral supplementation efficacy. Minerals are defined as naturally occurring inorganic substances in the soil, derived primarily from subterranean rock layers. Essentially, minerals are rock or part of a rock composition, and the amount of naturally occurring mineral found in the soil of a property is influenced by the naturally occurring rock in that area. Wind and water erosion, depletion rates based on vegetation usage, and the presence or lack of decaying vegetation can also affect a soil’s mineral profile.

There are several mineral elements (such as pure copper or zinc) and many more mineral compositions (multiple mineral elements combinations), but for a discussion on deer mineral supplements, we will focus on a few that are the most commonly used. Nutritionally, minerals are generally divided into two main categories: macro minerals and trace minerals. Macro minerals tend to be of higher concentration in the soil and also have a higher nutritional requirement for deer. Examples of these include calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium and sodium. Trace minerals are needed in smaller quantities but are still nutritionally vital. They include zinc, iron, copper, manganese, cobalt, selenium and iodine.

All minerals, macro and trace, perform specific nutritional functions. The one most commonly discussed with deer is the role mineral plays in antler growth, and for good reason. A hardened antler is comprised of about 55 percent mineral (22 percent calcium, 11 percent phosphorus, 3 percent magnesium, with remainder a combination of other minerals). Growing antlers are comprised largely of a collagen, a protein that forms the framework of the antler. When antlers begin to harden, minerals are extracted from the buck’s skeletal system and deposited on the protein matrix to become the mortar, so to speak, of



A mineral site with Whitetail Institute 30-06 mineral products supplements a whitetail’s diet with high-quality nutrition. This is what separates them from products that act only as attractants.

the hardened antler.

But minerals play many more roles other than just in antler development. Many of the minerals involved in antler growth are also involved in lactation and in turn can affect fawn health and survivability. Minerals such as copper, zinc, manganese and magnesium are intricately involved in metabolism affecting body weight and overall health. In fact, increased body weights are probably one of first affects that can be seen when mineral nutrition is improved in a deer’s diet. Iron is involved in hemoglobin production, which is particularly important during antler growth because of the large amount of blood flow to a growing antler.

Magnesium, phosphorus and calcium are critical factors in bone growth, and cobalt is essential for Vitamin B12 production in the rumen. Several trace minerals — such as iodine, copper, zinc and selenium (because of its involvement with vitamin E) — are involved in immune response and thus play a role in overall health. And although we are talking primarily about minerals, it’s important to mention that most true deer mineral supplements also contain the fat-soluble vitamins A, D and E. Fat soluble vitamins cannot be produced in a deer’s rumen, unlike B vitamins, and therefore can be beneficial through supplementation. These vitamins have too many functions to list, but a few include vision, reproduction, bone formation, immune support and epithelial tissue.

Attractants Versus Mineral Supplements

I often hear people say their mineral is working great because the deer are “tearing the ground up” or “digging a big hole.” But does that



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mean the product is working nutritionally? All you really know is that deer are eating it, not that it's improving the quality of the herd. I break products into two general categories: an attractant or a mineral supplement. The difference is that an attractant's main focus is to have deer eat it — to dig that big hole in the ground. Whether it supplies actual nutrition is irrelevant. On the other hand, a mineral supplement's first priority is providing high-quality nutrition. Of course, deer have to eat it, but the attraction portion of the mineral is considered after the nutritional portion is built.

As you might expect, there are some products that fall everywhere between attractants and true deer minerals. The issue is that many products that are basically attractants also claim to provide nutritional benefits. A term that is often used in the feed/supplement world is "tag dressing." What this means is you can put a pinch of nutritionally important minerals in a product and are then allowed to list them on the tag as ingredients. It's not enough to really do anything, but it can be promoted as being a "nutritional product" when it's really just an over-glamorized attractant. That leads to confusion in the market and makes people question the validity of all mineral supplementation.

Natural Versus Supplemented

Mineral nutrition obviously plays a major role in the overall condition and health of a deer herd. But many argue that deer have been doing fine for thousands of years without us getting involved and supplementing mineral in their diet. No one can argue that the "been getting along just fine" statement is true. But as deer hunters and managers, we want deer on our properties to not just "get along" but rather have everything they need to maximize health and growth. Why do people take mineral supplements? Because their diet might not provide all the minerals at the right levels for you to be as nutritionally healthy as possible.

Does that mean you'll shrivel up and die if you don't take a mineral supplement? No, but you might be much healthier if you take a supplement. Mineral in the diet of deer is largely derived from the plant material they consume, and the mineral content of that plant depends on the soil in which it grows. The higher the mineral content in the soil, the more mineral will be available in the deer's diet. And if you question soil mineral contents effect on deer quality, just overlay a map of Boone and Crocket or Pope and Young entries atop a U.S. Soil Survey map.

The areas of the country with higher mineral content will also have higher numbers of trophy entries. But regardless how mineral-rich a soil might be, it likely still lacks at least one or more minerals in terms of quantity. This is especially true in soils used to intensively grow crops. But even in areas with just natural vegetation growth, plants will pull minerals from the soil to use for growth. If not replenished, naturally or via fertilization, the mineral content in the soil will decrease. Therefore, it's safe to say any property would have some deficiency in soil mineral content.

Would that deficiency lead to deer sickness or mortality? Probably not, but would it lead to lower body weights, smaller antler growth and a poorer herd quality? It would likely affect those considerations, but without anything to compare to, most people wouldn't see it. In other words, deer might appear "normal," but how much better could they be if their mineral needs were met? You might have a quality deer herd, but introducing a mineral-supplement program would likely improve quality.

Empirical Research Versus Real-World Studies

Empirical research is conducted via the use of strictly controlled methodology to collect data that leads to conclusions that are significantly viable and repeatable. To do this, you must remove all variables or have a data set that is so large it diminishes the effect of any variables to the point of insignificance. That's the way most university research is conducted, and therefore, any studies that do not follow these strict methodologies are considered anecdotal. Little empirical research has been conducted on the mineral requirements of deer and the benefit of supplementation. The reason is that when doing research on wild deer, it's impossible to remove all variables and be able to repeat the research with the same inputs. Variables include weather, soil variances from property to property, natural and agricultural food availability, and dozens if not hundreds more.

So, the scientific world is hard-pressed to say whether mineral supplementation is beneficial. This is understandable, but I also think you must approach the subject with a little common sense. First, there are rooms full of research showing the benefit of mineral supplementation to large and small domestic ruminants. These animals, although domestic and fenced in pastures, have access to relatively the same vegetation that deer have access to within the same geography. You might argue cattle, being large ruminants and grazers instead of browsers, would not be comparable, but goats and sheep would be comparable, and there's ample research showing the benefits of mineral supplementation to those species.

The other consideration is the years of results that have been seen in every whitetail region across the country with hunters and managers using Whitetail Institute mineral products. Because the Whitetail Institute was the first to offer a deer mineral supplement, Imperial 30-06, it has the largest set of field studies on one product. Thousands of Imperial 30-06 users have collected hard data showing increased body weights of harvested deer and increased antler mass, density and overall size. Although there's not much data on fawn survivability and overall herd health, Imperial 30-06 users routinely see improved numbers in all of these areas. Although that's not empirical data in its purest form, you can argue that the large size of the data set can overcome many of the variability questions. Similar results are also being seen with Imperial 30-06 Plus Protein and the Cutting Edge family of nutritional supplements.

Conclusion

Caution is a good attribute if you are a consumer. Although some industries have products that must legally live up to their marketing claims, in the world of deer minerals, there is little oversight, so customers must do their research into a product's validity. I believe a good mineral supplement can be extremely beneficial to the quality of a deer herd. I would not, however, claim that body size or antler growth will instantly increase X percentage, because each deer herd and property have differing factors. But if you consider the role minerals play physiologically with deer, the fact that soils are depleted in at least some degree of minerals, domestic small ruminant research and the years of positive testimony of true mineral supplements users such as Imperial 30-06, the likeliness of not seeing some kind of positive result is remote. And in many cases, the likeliness of seeing tremendous results is far better than the odds you would ever get at Las Vegas. 🍀

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Nothing creates a “people jam” faster than the sight of a large-racked whitetail buck. This is evident by viewing people’s reaction, whether at a hunting show or in the wild. Antlers simply transfix people. I’ll never forget the first time I saw a large-racked whitetail on my parents’ farm. I couldn’t have been more than six years old, but the memories of that big buck loping in front of my dad’s pickup have stayed with me for a lifetime. Antlers have a way of doing that to people.

Wherever I go, people want to talk about antlers. I’m amazed at how many people think big bucks can be raised by merely letting them grow to old age. In reality, getting a buck from the fawn stage to one scoring more than 150 Boone and Crockett inches is a journey that includes many variables.

What it Takes

Genetics, age, habitat and herd management are four critical ingredients needed to produce optimum antlers. All must work in concert to achieve top-end antlers.

Genetics: There are 38 subspecies of whitetails from the tropical forests of Central and South America to the boreal forest of Canada, with only 17 north of the United States/Mexico border. These 17 have application to this article.

When it comes to genetics, all whitetails are not created equal. Though their antler growth, from start-up in early spring to velvet peel, is similar, several Northern subspecies have the potential of greater antler growth than some of their Southern cousins. That said, it’s been my experience that when it comes to free-ranging whitetails, all areas have good genetics for their subspecies.

Management: For too long, the harvesting of any antlered buck and limiting doe harvest has been an inhibiting factor to having



MAXIMIZE MAGIC SUMM

By Charles J. Alsheimer

Photos by the Author

healthy, thriving deer populations. When adult does outnumber antlered bucks more than 3-to-1, several problems occur. For starters, the rut becomes drawn out, placing tremendous stress on the buck population. The stress from an extended rut can stunt antler growth the next year. In addition, later-than-normal conception dates create late birthing dates, which further stresses the herd going forward.

Age: Most serious whitetail enthusiasts view age as the major ingredient to having peak antler growth. There's no question that age is required for growing top-end bucks. But don't think this is the sole answer, because as important as age is, a buck cannot top out without great food throughout the year, and the quality of food during summer is most critical.

Habitat: "You are what you eat" doesn't just apply to humans. Having the right food 365 days a year is critical for every creature, man and beast. In a whitetail's case, if it doesn't have the best available food every month of the year, it will never reach full potential. This is especially true when it comes to antlers.

Seasonal Food Requirements

Though a buck's ability to grow great antlers hinges on the four aforementioned factors, the role food plays at critical times can't

be overstated. For optimum antler growth to occur, a buck needs to come out of winter healthy and physically fit. If he is worn down to the point that his body has taken a major hit from the previous rut and winter, his antlers can be up to 20 percent less than they could have been.

For the better part of 25 years, I raised whitetails for behavioral and nutrition research. It provided a fascinating education and let me see what is required to get a mature buck's antlers from mere bumps on his head in late March to 150-inch plus antlers in roughly four months.

To maximize antler growth, deer need good browse and winter forage throughout winter to maintain healthy bodies. Here in the North, food plot forage such as Tall Tine Tubers, Winter-Greens, Beets & Greens, etc. can provide highly nutritious food in cold climates. Though planted food is great — and needed — whitetails rely heavily on browse for body maintenance when snow begins to fly. For this reason, it's critical to make sure your property has adequate browse available when snow begins to build.

In the late 1990s, North Country Whitetails and I conducted a study of browse species in western New York state to determine preference and protein values. The study was conducted at our 35-acre whitetail enclosure along with the assistance of Cornell University's NEAS Diagnostic Laboratory. During the year, we



ER SOLSTICE GROWTH

It is critical to have adequate to great forage and browse available during winter months to maintain healthy bodies which is vital for maximum growth when the solstice period arrives.



determined the crude protein and fiber content of 14 preferred and non-preferred browse species. What we discovered was quite revealing. The bottom line is that whitetails do not necessarily gravitate to the most nutritious natural food. It's important to remember that browse does not provide the protein levels needed to grow the best antlers, because most browse does not have more than 10 percent protein levels and most have considerably less.

For the most part, browse only sustains deer until green-up occurs. For great antler growth to occur, good soils, adequate moisture and forages with protein levels greater than 20 to 25 percent should be present when the summer solstice arrives.

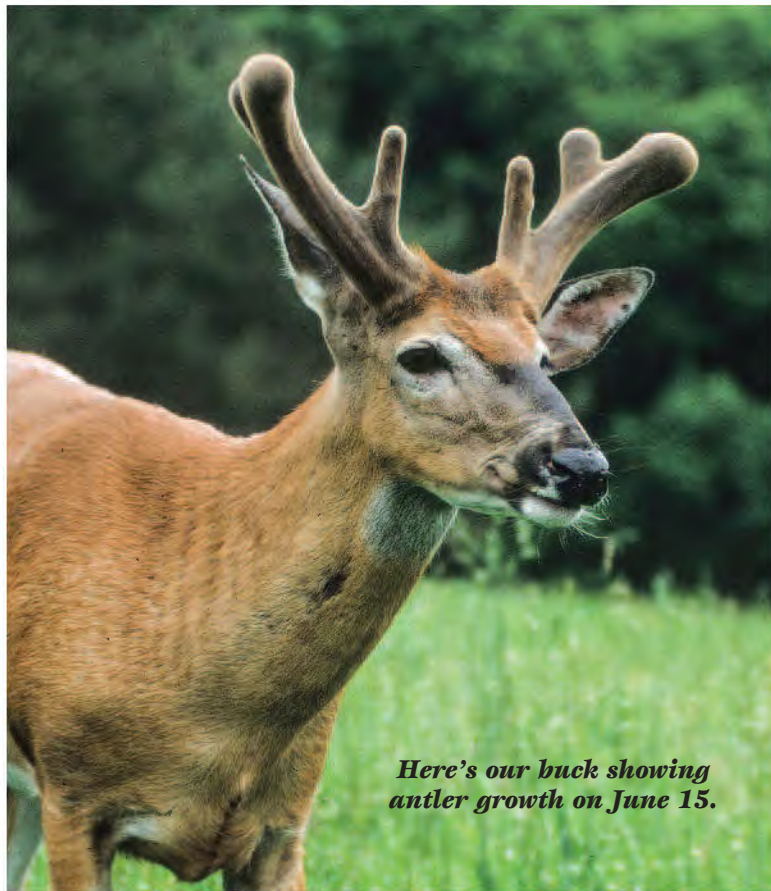
Slow to Start

In the North, mature bucks begin growing their antlers about April 1. Green-up has yet to occur, and daylight is far less than what it will be by late June. Consequently, antler growth is quite slow until mid-May. When green-up arrives, high-protein forages must be present to fill the nutritional needs required for maximize antler growth.

Though the entire antler-growing process is fascinating, the real attention grabber is what occurs around the summer solstice —June 15 through July 15. I'll illustrate the magic of this period using photos of a typical buck I raised. This buck was not part of any genetic antler-manipulation project. He was what I called a real deer. What follows



Here is a photo of our whitetail on May 15. From this point, high-protein forages are required for optimum growth to occur.



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Here is the final stage after antler peel, scoring 156 Boone and Crockett. The bottom line is that great food is required 365 days a year, with the 30 days from June 15 to July 15 being the most critical for optimum antler growth. Without great food during this time, bucks cannot reach their potential.

shows the growth process of his largest antlers, which grossed 156 Boone and Crockett inches at age nine.

April 1 to May 15: From January through March, more than a foot

of snow covered our enclosure's food plots. Though the enclosure deer dug through the snow cover for the Tall Tine Tubers in our food plots, their diet consisted primarily of browse and supplemental feed provided daily. As a result, the buck was healthy when he emerged from winter and began growing his antlers around the first week in April. Because green-up was still more than a month away, the buck's antlers didn't grow much because of brief day length and minimal protein in his browse diet.

May 16 to June 15: With the arrival of green-up in mid-May, leaf-out the end of May and longer day length, the stage was set for an explosion in antler growth. By the end of May, our Imperial Whitetail Clover food plots were lush, with protein levels exceeding 25 percent, providing just the ticket for great antler growth. The buck's velvet-clad antlers took quite a jump from mid-May to mid-June, but the best was yet to come.

Solstice Maximizer

June 16 to July 15: During this time, our local farmers often say, "It's time to make hay." It's also the time for whitetails to make antlers, because this 30-day window encompassing the summer solstice offers the greatest period for antler growth. Typical of all mature bucks, the accompanying photos illustrate what can occur during this time. With adequate moisture, the longest daylight hours of the year, and lush Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion plots, this buck's antlers exploded. Thanks to great food offerings, he went from having 8-inch main beams and four points on June 15 to heavy bulbous 9-point antlers on July 15 — a testimony of what can occur during the summer solstice's one-month period.

Finishing Touch

July 16 to Aug. 1: Though most growth occurs around the summer solstice, there is a little finishing that must be accomplished from mid-July through the first week or so in August. In this buck's case, he always finished growing his antlers by the first week in August, after which the antler-hardening process occurred. After he reached four years old, he consistently peeled velvet between Sept. 1 and 3 each year.

Summer Solstice Food

The importance of having awesome forage offerings during the magic 60 days from June 1 to Aug. 1 cannot be overstated, because without it, no amount of extended daylight or age will grow top-end antlers. During this period, each whitetail (buck or doe) can easily consume 10 to 12 pounds of vegetation per day. It takes a balanced diet of high-protein forages for bucks to grow their best antlers. For this reason, nothing can top what Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion bring to the food equation. During the right conditions, they can deliver protein levels exceeding 30 percent, along with many other nutrients, making them ideal for growing the best antlers possible.

Though antler growth gets most attention when it comes to critical summer food offerings, never forget that great summer food offerings also benefit the entire deer herd. Does need to be healthy when fawning season arrives. Consequently, when fawns hit the ground in late May and early June in the North, there must be high-protein forage available for lactating does and fawns. 🍄

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Field Tip Flight

Entry and Exit Strategies

Don't Spook Feeding Whitetails

By Scott Bestul

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

The big 10-pointer we called Saw Ear did everything you hope a late-season monster whitetail will do. He showed up early, fed hungrily and eventually walked within bow range of my dad.

Trouble was, by the time the buck made it within Dad's 30-yards-or-closer wheelhouse, the clock was two ticks past legal shooting light. And anyone who knows my dad will tell you that when the state says it's officially quitting time, you no longer shoot — regardless of the size of the deer, whether you can see your pins or any of a dozen ethical variables most people are willing to wrestle with. Which, of course, is why most everyone who knows him admires my father. In a world of relaxing morals and elastic ethics, Dad is a black-and-white guy.

But back to the deer. The Saw Ear Buck (a 170-class giant we'd been chasing all fall) had been joined by some smaller bucks and a dozen does. Any time you get a late-season food plot (Winter-Greens in this case) to perform like that, you realize that sweating and cussing in the hot August sun to plant them is worth it.

But although a field full of whitetails at quitting time is doubtlessly

exciting, it also poses a huge problem. Had Dad decided to crawl down from his tree stand, he would have spooked every deer in the plot. And it would be no generic, low-level spooking. We're talking about deer experiencing a bad-person-right-there-make-a-mental-note-to-never-eat-here-in-daylight-again event. In other words, unacceptable.

Fortunately, Dad knew how to get out of there without bumping deer, which I've learned after many years of hunting food plots, is one of the most important skills a hunter/manager can possess. Of course, it's fine if all your food plots do is feed deer. But let's face it; hunting over food plots and taking a whitetail now and then is a pretty neat reward, too. And if you want to consistently kill deer over food sources, you must do everything in your power to design covert entry and exit routes. What follows are some thoughts on accessing and leaving food plot stands and blinds that will keep you into good deer hunting throughout the season.

Ease on In

One of the problems of creating a killer food plot is that whitetails — being the lazy critters they are — like to bed tight to a food source, especially early and late in the year. This can make sneaking into a stand or blind tough. Bumping a mature buck can put an end to weeks of patterning. He'll go nocturnal or simply move to another area. Here are four tips for a covert entry:

- **Be an early bird:** One of the top things you can do — even if

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you expect that deer won't feed until the last rays of daylight — is to get in your stand or blind early. The main advantage of this is you're simply not hurrying, and when you're not in a rush, you make less noise. Also, any deer that might hear you on your approach (though you're walking quietly, right?) will have time to settle down before prime time. Finally, getting there early gives time for any scent trail you leave to dissipate. I've done extensive scent-control testing with drug-sniffing and tracking dogs, and time (and dry conditions) is one of the top killers of a scent trail. The older the trail, the tougher it is for a critter to smell.

- **Follow a screen:** Mature bucks are experts at using terrain and vegetation to hide their silhouette as they walk. Mimic them by following a ravine, creek bed, back side of a ridge or line of dense brush for your approach. Some of the most effective screens are ones you create in the off-season. This past spring, I used hinge-cutting to drop some low-value trees and create a wall of treetops that will hide my approach toward a log-landing food plot in the timber. Another plot behind my home is surrounded by switchgrass and scrub trees. I used a rotary mower (pulled behind an ATV) to create a path along the edge of the prairie grass during late summer. It's one of the cooler sneak-paths I've made, and I can't wait to use it this fall.

- **Clip a path:** The final yards to a setup is, in my mind, one of the most critical segments of the journey, especially in a hidey-hole plot or other food source potentially close to bedded deer. Consequently, I rarely hang a stand without clearing a narrow walking trail to the set. Using a handsaw or pruner, I clear a shoulder-width trail void of twigs and rocks that lets me make a silent approach those final few critical yards without fighting clothes-grabbing vines, brush and branches.

- **Get the rhythm:** I only use this technique in setups where I know bedded deer might be close and it's dry enough that I know a totally silent approach is impossible. But an old (and highly successful) hunting buddy once grabbed my arm as we walked toward a setup. "Only humans walk with a steady one-two cadence," Ron whispered. "Switch up your rhythm, and pause frequently, just like a deer, turkey or squirrel would." When I asked Ron about this later, he said he's used a walking stick to better create a three-step pattern and has even scratched in the leaves to imitate a walking turkey. That's something to think about when setups are surrounded by timber and the foliage is extremely dry.

Exit Strategies

The only thing tougher than getting to a stand undetected is getting out of one without ringing alarm bells for whitetails. As the anecdote at the start of this story suggested, exiting a stand or blind adjacent to a food plot full of feeding whitetails is a certified recipe for disaster.

In fact, I'll tell anyone that the first time you blow out a field of happily feeding deer, you'll see half as many the next sit. And things just go downhill from there, especially if you're bumping mature bucks or, worse, older does. Hunters like to think of big-racked bucks as survival Mensas, but the scary-smart deer are the old girls who've raised a few fawns. Get them suspicious of one of your setups, and they'll make it their mission to sniff you out every time they hit that plot. Here are three tips for getting out incognito.

- **Give 'em a bump:** The best way to get a hunter off a food plot is to drive in there on a truck or ATV and get him. Any deer feeding in the plot will bump off into the woods slightly. They'll listen to a few shenanigans in their feeding area and then resume dinner as soon as

they hear the noise go away. Some hunters have a hard time accepting the validity of this tactic, but think about it. If a farm-country whitetail freaked out every time they heard or saw a truck or ATV, they'd all relocate to Canada about Sept. 1, at least in my country.

Here's how my hunting buddies and I do it. If we have deer feeding around us at last shooting light, we just shoot a text to one of two of three others who are happy to come in for a pick-up. And then we just wait, which includes not setting a boot out of the stand or blind — no matter how cold, dark or scary it feels — until the vehicle appears and whitetails start running. The driver picks the hunter up at the base of the tree or platform, and the beauty of the system is that you can hunt the same spot the next day and expect no freaky behavior from deer.

- **Create a ruckus:** Naturally, there will be times when no one can ride in to the rescue when you face a food plot full of feeding deer. I've tried several gotta-get-outta-here options, with varying success. I've tossed rattling antlers from my stand (bad idea; deer just came closer, curious or looking for a fight), and even a bag full of metal screw-in tree steps (slightly better, but still a slight intrigue factor that scared some deer off while others came closer). When I remember to carry it, a coyote howler does a pretty good job. One of my hunting buds actually downloaded an audio app of a howling coyote on his smartphone and has cleared a plot with that.

- **Hypnotize 'em:** One of the most obvious solutions to this situation never occurred to me until a recent chat with an old friend and one of the country's top whitetail hunters.

"If I don't have someone who can come and get me, I take a high-power flashlight out of my pack and shine it right in the eyes of the deer around me," he said. "And then I just crawl out of the blind and walk off, keeping the light on the deer's eyes as I go. Sure, they know something is up, but they never clearly get it that I'm slipping out of a blind they'd best avoid in the future."

Conclusion

In my experience as a deer hunter and manager, planting food plots is one of the top strategies we can attempt to attract and hold whitetails to a property. But it's not enough to just have great deer feeding sources. We should be able to hunt them throughout the season. Planning sound entry and exit strategies is critical to achieving those results.

Back to Dad and his hunt for Saw Ear. Dad managed to get out of his stand that evening without bumping a bunch of deer, thanks to a timely pickup from my neighbor Alan, who showed up on an ATV at dark. And the next day, the wind was again perfect, and Dad crawled up the same stand. There were five minutes of shooting light left when Saw Ear joined the dozen other deer feeding in the plot, ate a few bites and then posed broadside at 30 yards. Dad's arrow sailed over the huge buck's back, and within seconds there was not a whitetail on that food plot.

I guess missing is a solid exit strategy in itself — but I know my dad doesn't recommend it. 🦌

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Impossible to Be the **BEST** and the Cheapest

By Hollis Ayres

Can any product be the cheapest and the best? If you're talking about food plot seed products, the answer is an emphatic NO. And that's why if you buy food plot seed solely on the basis of price, you'll likely miss out on the major benefits you could have enjoyed — and incur additional costs later that you could have minimized or avoided completely. That's no bargain.

The Informed Consumer

No matter what you buy, the only way to ensure the product will meet your needs is to approach the purchase as an informed consumer — someone who takes his specific needs and the product's ability to meet those needs into account before comparing prices. That process consists of five steps, which we'll cover in greater detail with respect to food plot seed purchases.



Step 1: Remember Why You're Considering Buying Food Plot Seed

The most common reason folks plant food plots is to help them improve their odds of hunting success. Success in that context can be defined by these goals: attracting and holding more deer, and improving their quality. Although that might seem obvious, I hope this article will illustrate how important it is to keep those goals in mind throughout the informed-purchase process.

Step 2: Correctly Prioritize the Purchase by its Importance to Your Odds of Success

Consider all the things you buy for hunting season. Your list would likely include a wide range of items, including rifles, scopes, bows, tree stands, camo clothing, gasoline, other archery equipment and food plot seed. Some items can affect your odds of success more than others, and each such purchase should be prioritized accordingly.

As a hunting-related example, consider this advice, which most of us have heard: "Buy a decent quality rifle, but put your real money into buying the highest quality scope you can." The reason is that the quality of your scope is the bigger limiting factor in how well your rifle/scope setup can perform. In that way, your scope is more important to your odds of hunting success than the quality of the rifle.

The rifle-and-scope example shows the importance of prioritizing purchases in a narrow subset of hunting-related purchases. Food plot seed is arguably even more important because it directly affects the number and quality of deer you have to hunt. In most cases the performance of your food plots is one of, if not the, biggest factor for hunting success.

Step 3: Identify the Performance Requirements You Expect the Product to Meet

Armed with the understanding of how important food plot performance is to your odds of hunting success, you can see how critical it is to make informed purchases of food plot seed. That requires identifying specific performance requirements we expect the product to meet.

Attractiveness to Deer

When it comes to food plot products for deer, attractiveness to deer is the most important forage-performance characteristic. One reason is obvious — forage must be attractive to deer if it is going to attract and hold them, and unless deer are highly attracted to a forage, the rest of the performance characteristics on the list don't matter. Also, consider that the longer your forage planting remains in a highly attractive state, the more deer you'll have to hunt, and the longer you will hold them.

High germination rate: Just because you plant a food plot does not mean it will germinate. Different grades and qualities of seed have various rates of germination. The higher the germination rate of the seed you buy, the better.

High seedling survivability: Forage plants are at their most vulnerable to changes in soil moisture just after seed germination (seedling stage) because their roots are still immature. The better

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seedlings can tolerate fluctuations in soil moisture, the better they can survive beyond the seedling stage.

Rapid growth: The faster a forage can grow, the more tonnage it can provide shortly after planting, and the better it can keep up with browsing pressure.

Heat, cold and drought tolerance: This one's pretty obvious. The better a forage can withstand unexpected weather extremes, the better its chance of survival.

High nutritional content: This performance characteristic is significant for folks who want to improve the quality of the deer they hunt. There are three main reasons, all of which generally concern naturally available forages in most areas: their nutritional content is comparatively low; they can tend to become tough (less palatable to deer) as they mature; and they can be exhausted quickly.

As with any animal, deer have an upper genetic limit for antler size and body weight. In most cases, natural food sources provide sufficient nutrition for deer to survive and for bucks to grow antlers, but usually nowhere near the upper limit of their genetic potential. Also, even natural forages that are relatively high in protein during spring and summer often tend to get too stemmy and tough for deer to effectively use, and they usually don't last very long. Likewise, in most areas there are few if any natural forages available in fall other than mast crops such as acorns, which offer carbohydrates sufficient for deer to build their fat reserves for winter. Also, remember the importance of nutrition during the window from late winter until spring green-up, when bucks are trying to recover their winter health losses so they can begin devoting substantial resources to antler growth — right when nutritious natural forages haven't emerged yet in most areas. That's why any hunter or manager who expects his food plots to help deer realize more of their genetic potential for antler size and body weight should make sure the forages he plants will be highly nutritious and remain palatable and available to deer on as constant a basis as possible.

Step 4: Evaluate Each Competing Product's Performance Potential

If you were hoping we'd start comparing competing products in Step 4, I'm sorry to disappoint you. We're not there yet because we still have to evaluate each product individually to determine how well each can fulfill the requirements we set out in Step 3.

Step 4 can also be the most difficult step in the process because of the need to only consider indicators of product quality and performance capacity that are reliable. It can be tempting to be swayed by fancy bags and other snazzy advertising, but that's not what we're looking for. We're looking for things that show whether the advertising is true, so consider the facts, and ignore the hype. Reliable indicators include the company's longevity and track record in the industry, and its design and manufacturing processes.

Longevity and track record: A company's longevity and track record in the industry are among the most reliable indicators of its product quality and commitment to customer service. Before we get into why that's the case, you need to dig a little deeper and focus on how successful the company has been with products you're seeking. That's especially true in the food plot industry, because so many companies have diversified into other pursuits, such as land sales and a variety of other types of hunting equipment. The good news is that's an extra step you don't have to take with Whitetail Institute. It started the

food plot industry 30 years ago and has remained the industry leader ever since. And it has done so while sticking to its core business.

Company longevity and track record are excellent indicators of product performance because they are gauges of its customer satisfaction. A company's longevity and track record with its products depend heavily on its ability to satisfy its customers' needs to such a high degree, and so cost-effectively, that people return with repeat business instead of buying from someone else. And they bring their friends. A history of doing so year after year shows that its customers recognize value in the company's products.

Product design and manufacturing processes: Unlike a company's longevity and track record in the industry, which are usually fairly easy to determine by simple observation, getting a clear picture of a company's product design and manufacturing processes can be more difficult. Some companies, such as the Whitetail Institute, are proud to tell you of all the steps they take to ensure that its products are the best performers. And it also then makes sense that if a company won't tell you what steps it takes in designing and manufacturing its products, there's a reason.

For example, let's consider a hypothetical seed product offered by a hypothetical manufacturer to be the cheapest food plot product. Let's also say the company doesn't readily disclose its product design and manufacturing processes. What reliable indicators might you find in the company's product design and manufacturing processes that might affect the Step 3 performance requirements? To answer that, you'd need to have an idea of how a manufacturer might keep its design and manufacturing costs as low as possible, and even though the manufacturer might not tell us, we can make some reasonable assumptions.

First, the manufacturer would need to obtain the cheapest seed available. That suggests purchasing seed on the open market with cost as the overriding factor. It also suggests that the manufacturer would try to find a seller who will agree to discount the seed even further for several reasons, such as inferior germination rates. Then, after it has obtained the seed, the manufacturer would have to get it on store shelves in a way that keeps costs to a minimum. That might require spending a little to make bags with catchy graphics to lure consumers in, but beyond that, the cheap seed would basically go straight into the bags and onto store shelves.

Taking into account the product-performance characteristics we set out, it's likely you already see how that scenario might result in a product that's sorely lacking in performance. The most obvious potential problem is with attraction, a factor that some manufacturers of low-priced seed products might compromise on to save costs.

Another potential problem area concerns germination. Cheap seed often carries comparatively low germination rates. Manufacturers of cheap seed products might also compromise on how quickly those products can grow and how well they can withstand adverse conditions that might reduce the planting's ability to develop or even survive.

Buying the cheapest seed also carries many other potential drawbacks. You'll be able to spot them as we discuss why Whitetail Institute seed products can never be the cheapest in the food plot market.

Whitetail Institute Food Plot Products

In comparison, what reliable indicators could you find to suggest that Whitetail Institute seed products can meet the Step 3 require-

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TRUFIRE

ments? Again, we'll ignore the attractive bags, and because the Whitetail Institute doesn't pay celebrities to endorse its products, we'll even ignore the many positive comments and recommendations experts and celebrities give us on TV. As you'll see, it takes a lot of time, effort and money to produce Whitetail Institute Seed products, but the Whitetail Institute knows it's worth it and has proven it.

Product development: The Whitetail Institute develops its forage products through strict adherence to the scientific method, which is considered by scientists to be the exclusive process for reaching conclusions that are reliable. Reliability is assured by the scientist carefully controlling and replicating tests, and collecting and analyzing data from the tests purely as an observer. By following the scientific method in all phases of its development and testing, the Whitetail Institute ensures that its results are extremely reliable.

On average, it takes the Institute about four to six years to go from idea to product, although some have taken even longer. The Whitetail Institute scientifically develops new plant varieties specifically for food plots for deer.

The Whitetail Institute also tests its forage components individually and in different ratios to each other to determine the best performing formula for each Whitetail Institute product. Testing is performed first at the Whitetail Institute and later at certified research stations across North America to determine optimum components, compo-

nent ratios and seed rates. At all stages of testing, test blends are accessible by wild, free-ranging deer.

At the Whitetail Institute, real-world testing is not a step in new product development. It is a constant that starts with initial evaluation and continues as long as the Whitetail Institute offers the product.

Manufacturing: When it comes to manufacturing its forage blends, the Institute spares no expense or effort. That focus governs everything the company does from the evaluation of potential forage candidates through the process until the product is delivered to the customer.

Farmers who commercially produce Whitetail Institute seed must abide by strict requirements through the process, from initial planting throughout the growing cycle, to deliver seed that meets the high standards Whitetail Institute demands. This process costs a little more, but it plays a huge part in the final result: You getting the best food plot products possible.

The Whitetail Institute also coats its seeds with the finest polymer coatings before packaging (the coating is the brightly colored seed surface you see whenever you open a Whitetail Institute forage product). The Whitetail Institute's Rainbond seed coating, for example, is a



Reliability is assured by the scientist carefully controlling and replicating tests, and collecting and analyzing data from the tests purely as an observer.

high-tech coating containing a polymer that acts like a mini-reservoir, absorbing up to 200 times its weight in water and keeping it next to the seed as it germinates and starts to grow. As the seedling uses the water held by the coating, the water is replenished as the coating continues to absorb water from the soil.

Why is Rainbond seed coating important? The first reason is seedling survivability. Raw seed can have a much lower survivability rate than seed that has been properly coated. The big killer of raw seed is having the seed germinate on tiny amounts of moisture that are insufficient for the seedling to survive. The coating on Whitetail Institute seeds helps ensure the seeds wait to germinate until sufficient moisture is present in the soil to sustain the seedlings.

The second is inoculation. Some plant types require specific bacteria in the soil to grow and thrive. In many cases, the required bacteria are already in the soil — but not always. Also, the Institute coats its seeds to hold inoculant up against seeds that require it. Without the coating, those seeds might require you to purchase inoculant and then mix it in with the seed immediately before planting.

These are just some of the many steps the Whitetail Institute takes to ensure that its products are the best they can be.

Step 5: Buy the Product with the Highest Performance Potential Within Your Budget

Most of us have to budget for hunting-related expenses. Armed with the aforementioned information, though, you're ready to make informed decisions when it comes to buying seed for your food plots and, in doing so, maximize your odds of hunting success.

Are you making "informed" decisions on what food plot seed to buy? As you might have guessed, the answer is usually no if you just go straight to comparing prices. I hope this article has planted the seed (no pun intended) of the idea that you might need to do additional homework if you expect to get the most for your money.

Now, a few final thoughts. Are Whitetail Institute products for everyone? Frankly, no. Some folks will always buy based on price alone. And although that's unfortunate from our perspective, it's really OK. For those folks, it's good that other food plot products are available. If you want the best, though, that's why we're here. The Whitetail Institute guarantees you the best, and it delivers. 🦌

Five Step Process for Making Informed Purchase Decisions

Step 1: Remember why you're considering buying food plot seed.

Step 2: Correctly prioritize the purchase by its importance to your odds of success.

Step 3: Identify the performance requirements you expect the product to meet.

Step 4: Evaluate each competing product's performance potential.

Step 5: Buy the product with the highest performance potential within your budget.

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REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

about Whitetail Institute products...



Four years ago, we bought a piece of property in early March, and I immediately started working on land and deer management. We used Imperial Whitetail Clover along with two Pure Attraction annual plots. This land does not have the best soil unless you like steep hills and large rocks, but the food plots were done to Whitetail Institute specifications. And they exploded! We started having deer, turkeys and bear basically living in the plots. Our first year, we put in around eight acres of food plots. The largest trail cam picture of a buck we had that first year scored around 110. We had several landowners around tell us that food plots would not matter and the antler size would not change. They had seen the same deer size for the past 30 years. The second year, we had several trail cam pics of bucks score in the 115 to 120 range. Last year, the scores went into the low-to-mid 130s. This year, I harvested a buck that scored 142. Until then, the largest deer ever killed in the valley scored 125-5/8. That was in 1984. The change in the herd not only in antler size but also health has been eye opening, not only for me but also my neighbors. We are seeing flocks of 40 to 50 turkeys gathered in the clover, which up to recently have been non-existent in our area. It is a great testament to Whitetail Institute as to what their products can do. This has not been an easy process. An intense labor of love. But it has been worth it. I, my wife, and our five-year-old son have watched our property transform into something that we can all take pride in. Each year, Whitetail Institute products afford us the chance to spend time together outdoors, which has been so fulfilling to us. Enclosed is a picture of one of our Whitetail Institute food plots.

Jonathan Wilson - Arkansas



I had been using Whitetail Institute products for many years with minimal results. Reason being, I never paid much attention to how important soil testing was to the overall success of a food plot. I was only seeing does and small bucks. Two years ago, I did a soil test and did exactly what they told me to get the pH up to what Whitetail Institute products called for. Lime, fertilize etc. That first season the Imperial Whitetail Clover and Winter-Greens took off and I saw immediate results. And this past season, I harvested my best buck ever in over 50 years of bowhunting. I killed him when he walked into the Winter-Greens food plot. I can not emphasize enough to anyone the importance of proper soil preparation. I have been a Whitetail Institute user for over 15 years, and I am a Whitetail Institute user for life. I always knew Whitetail Institute products were good. I never knew how good until I followed the instructions to the "T."

Geoffrey Hemenway - Massachusetts

My dad started using Whitetail Institute products in 1990. Then my brothers and now me, as I now live on the home farm with my wife Rachel. We have planted almost everything Whitetail Institute offers with good results. Imperial Whitetail Clover, Chicory Plus (now Fusion), PowerPlant, Edge, Winter-Greens and others.

I enjoy putting these plots out because it gets me outdoors and away from this fast-paced world we live in.

I came home from work on a Friday evening and told Rachel tonight it will happen. It was a clear, cool evening, and that just seems to bring the bucks in our plots in the daylight. So, we hustled out to our stand, and it didn't take long till we started seeing deer. A little buck and a couple of does and fawns. About a half hour later, he stepped out in the Chicory



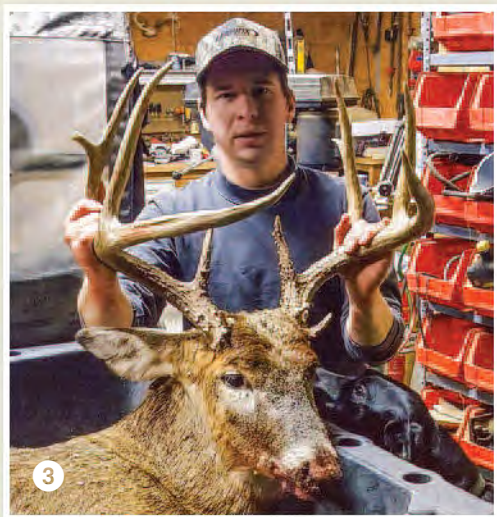
Plus plot. He fed straight in front of us about 80 yards for probably 20 minutes, but he was too far for my wife's crossbow. Yes, I have shot three nice bucks but I was shaking as bad as if I was the shooter. He eventually fed toward us slowly, 30 yards 25-20-15. At about 12 yards, he turned broadside. My wife got him in the scope. He swung his head right up at us. I hissed, "shoot now." She did and she drilled him. Wow, what a feeling. The hard work paid off. An awesome 10-point that gross scored 152 inches (photo 1). I also included a picture of my first buck, 148 gross-score (photo 2) when I was a 20-year-old. Thanks Whitetail Institute.

Jeremy Miller - Ohio

I am a 100 percent satisfied Whitetail Institute customer. Together, my dad, two brothers and I manage a farm in Missouri. But it wasn't until nine years ago, when we planted our first bag of Whitetail Institute's Alfa-Rack Plus that whitetail management really began on our farm. Before settling on Whitetail Institute, we were merely planting traditional crops such as corn, soybeans, and milo. Since then we have planted five different Whitetail Institute seed products including: Imperial Whitetail Clover, Alfa-Rack Plus, Fusion, PowerPlant and Winter-Greens. We have also had great results with 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin Supplements, as well as Arrest Max herbicide, and Slay herbicide.

That first bag of Alfa-Rack Plus was a huge success. We prepped the CRP field out in front of our favorite box blind, and planted the product with hopes of bringing in lots of deer. Needless to say it worked, and that Whitetail Institute food plot actually lasted for five years. You see, our area has a large deer population but fairly poor genetics, and therefore we never saw any really huge bucks. Whitetail Institute is helping to compensate for that; as we have seen our deer continue to have increased mass and antler growth over the last nine years. Not only are our bucks benefiting, but the does are getting the nutrition they need for themselves and their future fawns. Of course, the fawns love it so much that they hardly pay attention to anything else.

Our second attempt at planting a Whitetail Institute product wasn't as successful. We planted PowerPlant, but it did not break the ground. So, we called Whitetail Institute and were really impressed in the customer service and assistance that we received. The second go-round was better than expected. PowerPlant grew extremely tall, and the deer loved it. The rest is history; we have enjoyed these products so much!



I want to include some pictures of our food plot success over the past few years to really show how much we appreciate Whitetail Institute products. In the photos, you will see how much our deer love the 30-06 mineral lick (photo 1). Also included is a picture of one of our deer feeding in this year's food plot. (photo 2) Last but not least, the other picture shows the big buck I harvested this year during rifle season. He is truly a monster of a deer, with his mass and non-typical rack. (photo 3) The credit goes directly to Whitetail Institute for offering such great products. Thank you very much, and I look forward to continuing to do business with Whitetail Institute in the future.

Aaron Perrine - Missouri

We've planted Imperial Whitetail Clover since the 1980s. The protein it provides and the improved herd health we've noticed is why we use this great product. I harvested this buck chasing does across the clover field. The deer love this product and so do the turkeys. The does bed in the middle of the field.

*Bob Goodrich
- Iowa*



I have been using Whitetail Institute products for the past two years in New York. I planted 1.5 acres of Fusion and was very happy with it. Fusion was bringing deer to it every day! I was so happy with it I ordered Chic Magnet today and plan on planting 3/4 of acre with that. I will also be putting in one acre of Whitetail Oats Plus and one acre of Tall Tine Tubers. My brother and a friend of mine have asked me to help them plant Whitetail Institute products this year after seeing all my pics and how well the plots did. Enclosed is a photo of a 135- to 140-inch 10-pointer I killed during last year's gun season from a stand about 70 yards from a Fusion food plot. The past two years I have the killed biggest deer in my 30 years of hunting. Both were killed by food plots from Whitetail Institute! Thanks, Whitetail Institute, for the great products!

Brian Kelsey - New York



I started hunting deer in north-central Pennsylvania in 1973 at age 33, and now I'm 77. In 1985, we bought 24.5 acres, and in 1990 we bought 268 more, and I've used Imperial Whitetail Clover there since 1988. The deer eat the clover all the way into December, plus they eat Winter-Greens as well. I shot my biggest buck ever this past season. He is an 8-point and scored 140 plus B&C and weighed 250 pounds. He has a massive rack for our mountain area. We have five other big-racked deer that are in the area. I could go on and on, but the other hunters in our area of Pennsylvania have complimented our methods by stating that what we're doing is working, and deer are bigger and healthier. We just ordered 10 bags of 30-06 for mineral licks. Thanks, Whitetail Institute.

*Dick Broadbent -
Pennsylvania*

(Continued on page 65)

HOW TO SCOUT

OVERLOOKED FOOD PLOT SITES

Logging roads, firebreaks and other small openings can be transformed into food plots and provide great benefits for wildlife and great hunting.

By **J. Wayne Fears**

Photos by the Author

“I wish I had never bought this farm,” the new landowner said as we walked his property, 99 percent of which consisted of 8-year-old planted pines. “This place is nothing but a pine plantation. Without destroying a lot of trees, I have no place for food plots.”

You could hear the disappointment in his voice.

“Where does the old roadbed we just walked past lead to?” I asked.

“I think it goes down to an old home place deep in the pines where someone lived years ago,” he replied. “I haven’t walked down to it because it’s very weedy and snaky.”

“Let’s take a look at it,” I said, turning around to go down the lane.

As we walked down the weed-choked two-rut road. I pointed out that the road opening received plenty of sunlight. With some effort, it could be made into a long, narrow food plot. The landowner said



Search for old home places, as they often offer great food plot sites in a sea of planted pines.

Firebreaks can make excellent lateral openings to plant for deer.

he had never considered that, as he thought of food plots as being large, square fields.

After a short walk, we reached the old home place, complete with the remnants of an old house. From there, I saw where the homesteader had maintained a large garden behind the house. The garden site was head-high in weeds and saplings, but with a farm tractor and heavy-duty mower, it could become an ideal one-acre food plot in less than a day.

In that case, the landowner couldn't see great potential for food plots because he was looking at the sea of planted pines. Considering that most whitetail management programs call for 2 to 5 percent of the habitat to be in food plots, planting abandoned fields, logging roads, firebreaks, old home sites and other hidden woodland openings is a good way to transform enough acreage without having to cut and clear additional timber crops.

Adequate Sunlight is Critical

One of the major considerations for finding overlooked food plot locations is to ask whether there's enough sunlight during the growing season at each site. Finding an old log landing in the woods can be exciting, as it might hold promise as a remote food plot. But if mature hardwoods around it keep the site almost completely shaded, it's best to pass on that location unless you can open the canopy up to let in more sunlight.

Spend time getting to know your property well, especially remote spots you might have overlooked because they're too distant, thick with underbrush or look like a haven for snakes. Take an ATV ride, or walk into those overlooked areas.

If you don't visit during the warm months, obtain a map of the property, and mark the potential food plot sites so you can return and spend time during the growing season, looking for sunlight. Does a site receive enough light? If so, you have a potential food plot site. If not, keep looking, or consider opening up the site to let the sun in by cutting back a few junk trees. That can be especially important when selecting firebreaks and woods roads. More on that later.

The top cause of failure with narrow food plots is the planner didn't spend enough time

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looking up, especially during the growing season. Limited sunlight exposure can spell doom for new crops.

Abandoned Fields, Log Loading Decks and Old Home Places

You can easily overlook abandoned fields, old log loading decks and old home-place gardens, such as the one mentioned at the opening of this article, especially when they're overgrown with saplings and high weeds. The same can be said for old sawmill sites. However, you can reclaim most of these areas by using a farm tractor and heavy-duty mower. Because many openings of that type historically depended on good soil with plenty of sunlight, they're in locations where, with some equipment and labor, you can usually convert them into productive food plots.

Crews at large commercial pine forests often avoid old home places because of wells, old building remains and old farm equipment. These represent a hidden island of deer-management potential. Hunting clubs that lease land in this type of forest would do well to explore the possibilities of such places in huge pine plantations. Farmhouses and buildings often show up on old U.S. Geological Survey topo maps. Find an old home place, and convert it into a food plot. You will have a deer magnet.

Logging Roads, Skips in Pine Tree Planting and Firebreaks

In many areas, the most commonly overlooked food plot sites are abandoned logging roads. In fact, abandoned logging roads, firebreaks that run through wooded areas, skips in pine tree plantings or a couple of rows of pine seedlings that died can become some of the most valuable food plots. Most game animals are edge feeders, preferring not to venture too far into the open to feed during daylight, so the safety of food in a narrow strip adjacent to cover is attractive. When you consider the amount of food available in a long strip, it can feed a lot of critters.

Many biologists use the term linear openings when describing firebreaks, old logging roads and pine planting skips suitable for planting in wildlife food crops. These areas winding through the woods can positively affect more deer per planted acre than traditional food plots. It simply puts more food closer to animals.

Narrow linear openings must be wide enough to let sunlight reach the potential seedbed so plants can thrive. The minimum width is about 25 feet, but the wider the better. If your linear openings are not that wide, or edge timber shades the ground most of the day, consider cutting the edge trees back. This is called daylighting. Often, this can also be a good source of firewood. You might get a local logger to cut the road cover back to get another load or two.

Old logging roads you intend to plant cannot still be in use. If the

roads get a considerable amount of traffic from hunters or forest/farm managers, they cannot grow a good food crop. Selected roads should be blocked off. People who use the property should be notified to keep off the road. The same can be said for firebreaks. I have seen many hunting clubs plant firebreaks in late summer and, just as the crop was coming up, use those breaks for ATV trails. Linear openings used for food plots should not be used for roads.

Hunting these linear openings also offers a benefit over more traditional square or rectangular plots, which are almost always most productive for afternoon

hunts. Like more traditional plots, linear plots are great for afternoon hunts, but they are also great spots for morning hunts because you can catch deer feeding or crossing from one side to the other.

Soil Test, and Follow to the Letter

After you have selected an overlooked food plot site, determine what plot forages you want to plant. Select crops such as Imperial Whitetail Clover, Fusion, Edge, Alfa-Rack Plus or Imperial Whitetail Extreme. These perennials, when properly planted, will provide several years of service.

As with any crop, it's wise to take soil tests on your food plots to get the best results. Follow the soil test results to the letter. You can easily lime, fertilize and seed remote food plots by walking and using a hand seeder, or with an ATV using an electrical seeder or pull-behind seeder.

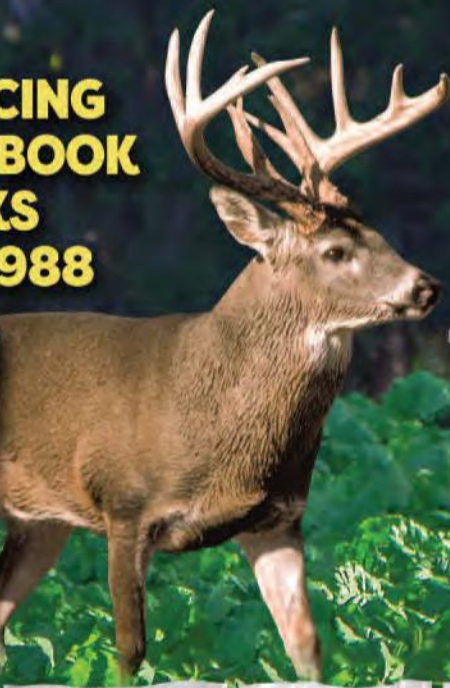
In my experience, you should use a small tractor to first break up logging roadbeds and log decks for a seedbed. Logging trucks pack the roadbed and decks so hard that you need a tractor to break up the hard-packed soil and establish a good seedbed. If the forest areas you hunt don't have traditional food plots and you can't cut timber to create plots, seek overlooked openings that get plenty of sunlight. You and the deer will be glad you did. 🔥



In remote areas, you can use a heavy-duty ATV for much of the required food plot preparation.

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Meet the Weed Master —

Dr. Carroll Johnson

By Jon Cooner

Whitetail Institute Director of Special Projects



One of the hallmarks of the Whitetail Institute is its commitment to providing customers with accurate information to help with deer

management. A big reason the Whitetail Institute is so successful in meeting that need is the top-tier professionals on its staff who continually provide information to customers. When it comes to weed and herbicide sciences, Dr. Carroll Johnson is a highly qualified expert and our go-to guy.

Dr. Johnson's professional qualifications are as good as they get. Most recently during his 33-year career, he has been a research agronomist (weed science) with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, and conducts weed science and agronomic research, including organic production of peanuts, cotton, biofuel crops and vegetable crops. Areas of Dr. Johnson's research include the ecology of weeds, integrated weed-management systems and the use of alternate strategies to manage weeds in certified organic production systems. Before accepting his position with the USDAARS, Dr. Johnson was an extension agronomist with the University of Georgia for almost five years. He has published 76 articles in scientific journals, 36 popular press articles and 11 extension service bulletins. He is a regular contributor to Whitetail News and the author of the weed-control chapter in *Quality Food Plots*, published by the Quality Deer Management Association.

Dr. Johnson's peers have recognized his research accomplishments. His honors include the Award for Excellence in Research from the American Peanut Research and Education Society in 2002; Fellow, Southern Weed Science Society in 2009; the Land Stewardship Award from Georgia Organics in 2012; Fellow, American Peanut Research and Education Society in 2012; Outstanding Senior Research Scientist at the University of Georgia-Tifton Campus in 2013; and Fellow, Weed Science Society of America in 2015. He graduated from Auburn Uni-

versity in 1979 and North Carolina State University in 1981 and 1984. He resides in Tifton, Georgia, with June, his wife of 26 years, and 22-year-old twin daughters, Anna and Sara, who recently graduated from the University of Georgia.

If Dr. Johnson's name is already familiar, it's likely because you've read his highly informative professional articles on agronomy and weed control in Whitetail News. His first article in Whitetail News was published in 1998, but his involvement with Whitetail Institute goes back much farther — about 20 years on a formal basis. During that time, he has been invaluable to the Whitetail Institute in helping introduce Slay and Arrest MAX, and in training Whitetail Institute staff to ensure the information we provide customers about those products is accurate and complete. He also serves as an able source of information on resolving complicated and difficult weed problems our customers sometimes face.

Informally, Dr. Johnson has been part of the Whitetail Institute family since its beginning in 1988, when his father, Dr. Wiley Johnson, was the Whitetail Institute's first director of forage research. I got to know Dr. Johnson in 2006, when I was asked to write an article for Whitetail News about his father, who had died that year. Like his father, Dr. Johnson is a rare combination of brilliant scientist and gifted communicator, and his goal is to assist others by sharing his vast knowledge.

Even with all of Dr. Johnson's accolades and talents, the thing I value most about him is his friendship. We've hunted together through the years, share many interests and have the same sort of wry sense of humor. But most important to our friendship is the respect I have for his character. That, I believe, is illuminated in the remarks Carroll included in his eulogy to his father:

"On Saturday morning, I spent a couple of hours cleaning up the yard at Dad's house in Auburn, and I needed a pair of work gloves. I had left mine at home in Georgia, but I found a pair of Dad's work gloves in his truck. Work gloves are like a pair of boots — they need to be broken in to fit the user's hand. Dad's work gloves fit me perfectly, and that made me realize that Dad had been preparing my brother and me to wear his gloves in another way — so that we would be ready to stand at the front of the family as its leaders. Dad set a very high standard in an unassuming way, and my brother and I are now able to wear our Dad's gloves.

"To all men with young children or grandchildren, I would like to present my father as an example of a great father who spent a lot of time with my brother and me, and our children. A great father spends time in all sorts of ways with his kids, even when they are grown. A great father sets high standards for his children and lives his life to the same high standards. That way, his gloves can be worn by his children."

It's not often I get the opportunity to write an article about a good friend like Dr. Johnson. If I haven't done him sufficient service, his own words will make up for my shortcomings. 🙏

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Whitetail Institute **RECORD BOOK BUCKS...**



Bryan Wafford – Ohio

I am from southern Ohio and have been using Whitetail Institute products for three years. I've planted Winter Peas Plus, Tall Tine Tubers, Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion. Since I have started using them, I have noticed an improvement in the racks of the deer on my 89-plus acre property. I have also noticed the deer have been able to withstand the winter months easier due to the healthy nourishment these products provide them.

I am very proud to say that after years of hard work and the help of Whitetail Institute products, I harvested a once-in-a-lifetime buck this year with a 23-point rack scoring 214-1/8 inches. I got my first trail cam picture of him three years ago, and I believe Whitetail Institute products helped me tremendously in keeping him on my property for three seasons until the perfect opportunity came to harvest him this past Jan. 7. I am beyond satisfied with the results I have received from Whitetail Institute products and look forward to using them to help attract and hold more deer and hopefully produce another once-in-a-lifetime buck.

Dylan Norton – Alabama



I'm very blessed to have a dad who took a lot of time taking me hunting since I was a little boy. I can't thank him enough. We are fortunate to have a good place to hunt. We've killed a lot of deer over the years on this place, and some of them were good decent bucks.

Three years ago, we started using 30-06 Mineral and 30-06 Plus Protein and have had great results with the deer using it. Our minerals licks are all about three-foot by three-foot wide and a foot deep. This past season, we also planted PowerPlant, and the deer hit all the PowerPlant fields hard. A trail cam picture is included that shows about a 150-inch buck by the PowerPlant.

This past October, I was hunting on what we call the swamp area, which is an area we use a lot of the 30-06 minerals. I've been getting trail camera pictures for about two months in this area of a great buck that had some freaky points growing forward off the brow line area. We were guessing he would score in the 150s and with his freaky points he would be easily recognizable.

This particular afternoon I had seen about eight young bucks but I had made my mind up to only shoot the big one with freaky points. With about only five minutes of legal shooting light left, the big buck walked from behind me and right under my stand. When I saw him, I got a serious case of buck fever. I was shaking all over. I was able to calm myself down enough to make a good shot at 20 yards. He only ran about 100 yards. I gave him about 30 minutes before I started blood-trailing him, and it took me about 30 more minutes to finally find him.

As soon as I saw him, I knew I had killed a buck of a lifetime and that we had way under estimated how big he really was. We rough-scored him at 172.



Will Brantley – Kentucky



We'd been after this buck — The Big 6 — for two years. I shot him this past September while he was chowing down in my clover and chicory plot. On a small farm like ours, good perennial plots are the most important piece of the hunting and management puzzle. Maintaining them is like protecting an investment. I treat mine with Arrest Max in late spring to control the grass, and then keep them mowed to about eight inches tall throughout the summer. This will be the

fourth season for this plot, and it looks better than it ever has.



Bill Knight – Iowa

We planted our first food plot about 25 years ago. We planted clover from the co-op and we saw some deer in it but the most we saw at one time was six or seven. Two years later, my dad bought a bag of Imperial Whitetail Clover to try. We planted the same field, and the difference was like night and day. We saw deer in that field morning, noon, and night. I saw 51 deer in it at one time. Since then we've planted a lot more Imperial Whitetail Clover and also Winter-Greens, Tall Tine Tubers and Extreme, and these products are outstanding as well.

We killed good deer before we planted our food plots, but we've killed a lot more big bucks and we see a lot more deer as well since planting. We killed a 206-inch buck several years ago and we've killed about 20 others that score 150 inches and up.

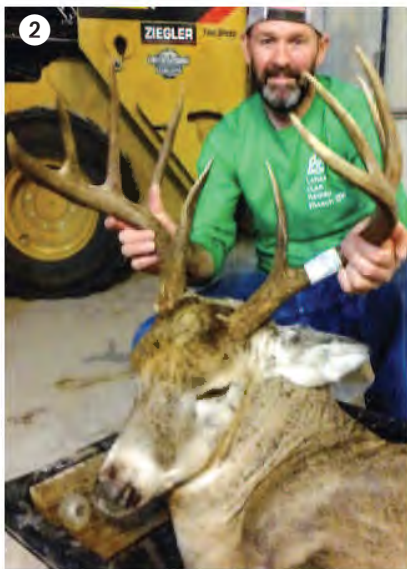
I have been blessed to kill a lot of great bucks in my life with my bow but two years ago I killed my best buck yet. He is a 10 by 6 that scored 191-1/8 inches. (photo 1) We have several trail cam pictures of him in our Imperial Whitetail Clover plots, and I killed him right on the edge of a thick bedding area about 100 yards below one of our Imperial Whitetail Clover plots.

This past season, I was blessed again. The wind was right, so I decided to hunt what we call The Kill Plot. It is a three year old Extreme plot. It's an awesome spot surrounded by thick cover.

I had heard a buck grunting an hour or so earlier up on a ridge above me and had just about forgotten about it when I heard it again. But this time, I could see deer moving my way. I reached for my bow and looked back at the plot, and a doe was on the edge of the plot staring at me. Fortunately, she relaxed and began feeding. I got my bow down, and I saw him. It took a little time, but he eventually gave me a 15 yard shot.

Although he's not my biggest buck, he is one of the most beautiful I've ever killed. (photo 2) He scored 166-5/8 with a 21-5/8 inch spread and only 1-3/8 inch of deductions.

Whitetail Institute food plot products are the best there are — period. The nutrition they provide helps with herd health and their ability to draw them to our property is off the charts. Thanks, Whitetail Institute for making such great products.



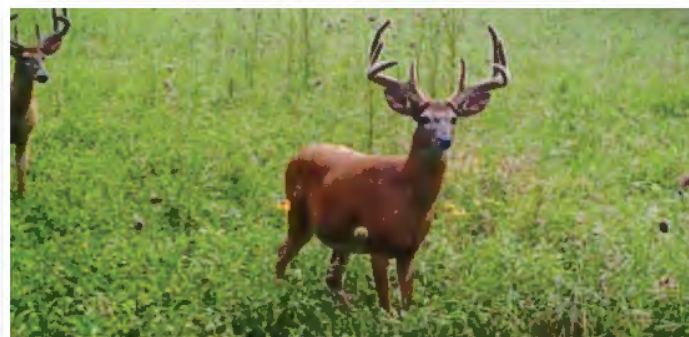
Casey Moe – North Dakota

It all started two seasons ago when I spotted a great deer in one of my Alfa Rack Plus food plots. I had several encounters, but he never got close enough to get an arrow in him.

Last season began early, with me getting pictures of the buck right away. His distinctive gash in his ear let me know he made it through the season and was back in town. I started patterning him right away and found out he was using a hay field, an Imperial Whitetail Clover plot and an Alfa Rack Plus plot as his main food sources, all in a generally small area. I found out he used the Imperial Whitetail Clover plot in the daylight and the others only during the night. He grew into what I thought was a 150-inch typical 5-by-5.

Sept. 9 came around and I knew where I would be headed for a great afternoon hunt. While patiently waiting for him to show up another "shooter" buck I call "the fat five" showed up. A short tined 5x5 but a very massive and thick antlered deer. It was a hard pass but I was still hopeful that the bigger buck would show up. With five minutes of legal shooting light left my hopes were slowly sinking. All of a sudden, I heard a loud snort wheeze. Sure enough, the buck I was after made his was out and into the clover plot. He walked by perfectly at 22 yards and I let one go. I could see my lighted nock and it looked like it was placed in a great spot and I felt a sense of relief overwhelm me.

I crawled down and left everything in the stand, rushed to the pickup and called my buddies. We all tracked for hours, following a small blood trail for almost 700 yards. Right when I was going to call it a night, roughly 2 a.m., my flashlight caught the white belly of a giant buck. He gross scored 159-7/8 inches. 🦌



Send Us Your Photos! Do you have photos of a buck that qualifies for the Pope & Young, Boone and Crockett or your state record books that you grew or took with the help of Imperial products? Send it to us and you might find it in the Record Book Bucks section of the next issue of *Whitetail News*. Email your digital photos and a 3 to 4 paragraph story telling how you harvested the deer and the role our products played to info@whitetailinstitute.com or send them to: **Whitetail News, Attn: Record Book Bucks, 239 Whitetail Trail, Pintola, AL 36043**

IMPERIAL CLOVER

No. 1 Choice for Turkeys as Well as Whitetail

By Brian Lovett

Photos by Tes Jolly



Turkey hunting had been somewhat slow the previous few days, so I'd decided to check out a favorite property I hadn't visited yet that spring. Slowly walking and calling along logging roads in deep timber netted nothing — not even a distant gobble or glimpse of a bird. Yet with the sun high and nothing better to do, I resolved to speed-scout the area for hints of turkey activity.

Easing up the main trail, I slowly peeked over a ridge to look for birds in an Imperial Whitetail Clover field. The opening was empty, so I traipsed along the edge of the timber, searching for tracks, scratchings, droppings and other visual clues. Pay dirt awaited me at the far end.

There, etched in the edge of the clover plot, was a map to turkey heaven. Gobbler tracks and strut marks carved up the soil, and abundant droppings made it clear that turkeys loved the area. In fact, I couldn't remember the last time I'd seen that much sign in one spot. I might not have heard anything that morning, but I knew I had to hunt that field edge the next day. A longbeard had obviously been frequenting the plot to pick up hens, and I was determined to meet him there.

Mutual Success

That incident was just the latest chapter in a long mutually benefi-

cial relationship. Whitetail News readers know that the Whitetail Institute introduced Imperial Whitetail Clover in 1988, creating the wildlife food plot industry. Many folks also remember how the late 1980s and early 1990s gave rise to a nationwide turkey hunting boom, as burgeoning bird populations across the country allowed unprecedented opportunities. And although it's not often mentioned, Imperial Whitetail Clover played a role in that trend and the success of American turkey hunters.

"Many experts believe chufa is the best turkey food, and who are we to argue, we offer chufa (Whitetail Institute Turkey Select Chufa)?" said Steve Scott, vice president of the Whitetail Institute. "It's a good choice if you're just hunting turkeys or have plenty of land. But if you're planting for deer and turkeys, Imperial Whitetail Clover is a much better choice."

Turkey biology backs that up. Clovers are among the first plants to green up in spring, and turkeys are attracted to the nutritional benefits of that fresh growth, especially when agricultural waste grain is scarce and other common foods — soft mast, for example — haven't developed. Further, as clover grows, it provides nesting cover for hens and a haven for grasshoppers and other insects, which are especially important food sources for protein-hungry poult in late spring, summer and fall.

"Chufa is a good part of your overall management plan," said William Cousins, director of operations for the Whitetail Institute. "Because it is a warm-season crop, turkeys will feed in the plot in the early fall after the tops brown and tubers are produced. It does not provide year-round attraction. Imperial Clover will provide much longer attraction."

"Turkeys will eat the actual clover plants, but a healthy clover plot is also full of insects, and turkeys like to hunt bugs in clover. Clover plots will get thick and grow taller by mid-spring and provide good cover and nesting habitat."

That doesn't mean chufa doesn't have a role in turkey management and hunting. However, Imperial Whitetail Clover provides more benefits and year-round attraction. Moreover, most land managers hunt deer in fall and winter before turning their thoughts to spring turkeys, and clover plots are obviously important for whitetails. Imperial Whitetail Clover creates two-pronged benefits: critical nutritional and attraction power for whitetails, and nutritional, nesting and attraction power for turkeys and other wildlife.

"If you have soils that are too well drained and too dry to support clover, that's a place you might want to consider planting chufa," Scott said. "But the No. 1 food plot choice for deer hunters who also hunt turkeys should be Imperial Whitetail Clover. It offers the best of both worlds. It attracts both game animals."

Clover also provides great turkey hunting advantages, especially for youngsters or hunters with limited mobility. The open expanse of a clover plot lets a shooter see turkeys clearly and prepare for a quality shot. Further, they're great places for decoy setups, as birds can see the fakes from afar and react to them. In addition, food plots are ideal spots for permanent or pop-up blinds, where people can set up in comfort and call for long periods.

The bottom line? "Imperial Whitetail Clover cannot be beat for deer and turkey hunters," Scott said.

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turkeys sounded off at sunrise. Two jakes half-gobbled from the tree line to the west, but another bird soon got my attention. The turkey gobbled late and was probably a quarter-mile away, but he answered every tree yelp I made and seemed serious about working. At fly-down time, he hit the ground, cut off my string of yelps and swiftly cut the distance between us along a scrubby ridge. Then he went quiet.

"Well, he's picked up hens or he's coming," I thought. Time to sit tight.

Minutes later, two red heads popped up through the brush. Jakes. They stood awkwardly for a bit and then sauntered away, perhaps put off by the strutter decoy I'd placed in the clover plot. That was a good sign, but where was the gobbler?

Soft footfalls in the leaves behind me revealed the answer. He was coming to the plot, just as I'd figured. Without hesitation, the long-beard marched into the open and stared down the full-body gobbler decoy. Then, he leaped into the air, thrashing the fake and knocking it off its stake. Satisfied that he'd bested a rival, the gobbler then marched to the hen decoy, never breaking strut. I shot him there, and he dropped and flopped atop the numerous tracks he'd left that spring. Imperial Whitetail Clover had made the difference again, and I'd enjoyed a great hunt thanks to its awesome attractiveness to turkeys. 🦃

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The WEED DOCTOR

By W. Carroll Johnson, III, PhD., Weed Scientist and Agronomist

The Pandora's Box Syndrome: Weed, Weeds and More Weeds

When readers of my generation hear the name Jethro Tull, we usually think of the British rock band from the 1970s. There is another Jethro Tull — the original; an astute, self-taught “agriculturalist” from early 18th century England. I have a scanned copy of an essay written by Tull titled “Horse Hoeing Husbandry: An Essay on the Principles of Vegetation and Tillage.” This scanned copy from the Library of Congress originally came from the personal library of one of our founding fathers, John Adams. There is a line from this essay that’s relevant to managing weeds in food plots: *“Seeds of most sorts of weeds... propagate and continue their species, by shedding off-spring in the ground (for ’tis observed they are generally before the corn); and the seeds of these do the same to the next sown crop; and thus perpetuate their savage, wicked brood from generation to generation.”*

Every time a site is tilled for a food plot, whether new ground or a previously used site, a Pandora’s box of weeds is opened.

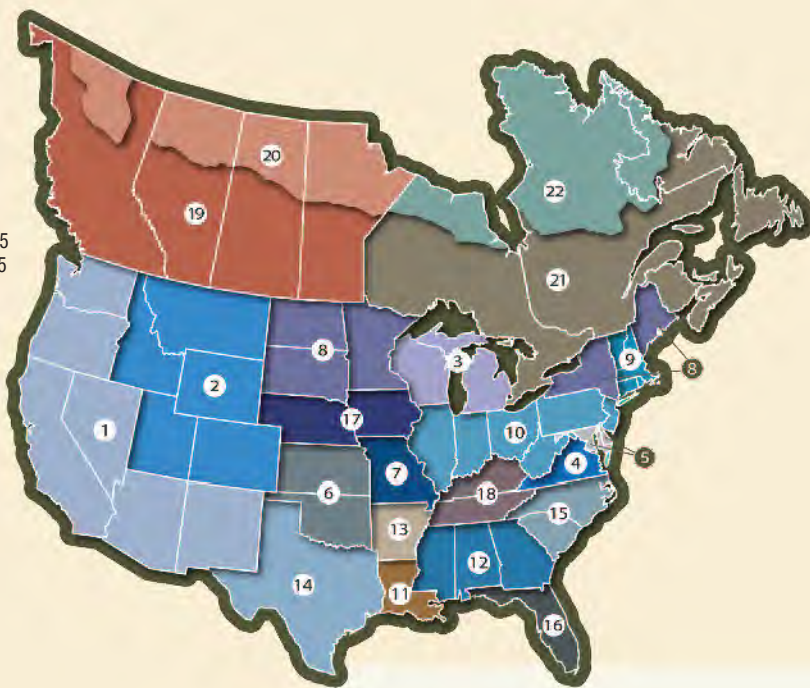


Food Plot Planting Dates...

PLANTING DATES FOR IMPERIAL CLOVER, ALFA-RACK PLUS, EXTREME, NO-PLOW, FUSION, CHIC MAGNET AND EDGE

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Call for planting dates | 7 North: Mar 15 - May 1
Aug 1 - Sept 15
South: Mar 1 - Apr 15
Aug 15 - Oct 15 |
| 2 Apr 1 - July 1 | 8 Apr 1 - June 15
July 15 - Sept 5 |
| 3 Apr 15 - June 15
Aug 1 - Sept 1 | 9 Apr 1 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 |
| 4 Coastal: Feb 1 - Mar 15
Sept 1 - Oct 15
Southern Piedmont:
Feb 15 - Apr 1
Aug 15 - Oct 1
Mountain Valleys:
Mar 1 - Apr 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 10 Mar 20 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 |
| 5 Feb 1 - Apr 1
Aug 1 - Sept 30 | 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15 |
| 6 Feb 1 - Apr 15
Sept 1 - Nov 1 | 12 Feb 5 - Mar 1
North: Sept 5 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 |
| | 13 Feb 15 - Apr 1
Sept 1 - Oct 30 |
| | 14 North: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 |

- | |
|---|
| 15 Feb 1 - Mar 1
Coastal: Sept 25 - Oct 15
Piedmont: Sept 1 - Oct 5
Mountain Valleys:
Aug 25 - Oct 15 |
| 16 North: Sept 25 - Nov 25
South: Oct 5 - Nov 30 |
| 17 Mar 1 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15 |
| 18 Feb 1 - Apr 15
Aug 20 - Sept 30 |
| 19 Apr 15 - June 15
July 1 - Aug 15 |
| 20 May 15 - July 1 |
| 21 May 1 - June 15
July 1 - Aug 15 |
| 22 May 15 - July 1 |

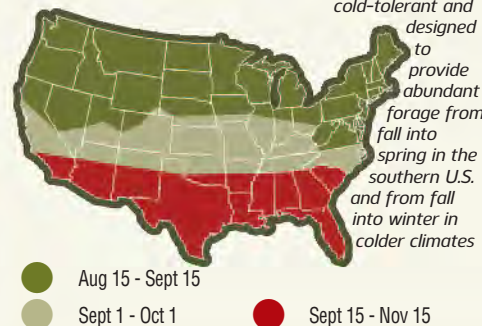


PLANTING DATES FOR VISION, PURE ATTRACTION, SECRET SPOT, WINTER PEAS, BOWSTAND AND AMBUSH

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|----------------------|
| 1 Call for planting dates | 7 North: Aug 1 - Sept 30
South: Aug 15 - Oct 15 | 13 Sept 1 - Oct 30 | 18 Aug 20 - Sept 30 |
| 2 Call for planting dates | 8 July 15 - Sept 5 | 14 North: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | 19 July 1 - Aug 15 |
| 3 Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 9 Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 15 Coastal: Sept 15 - Oct 15
Piedmont: Sept 1 - Oct 5
Mountain: Aug 25 - Oct 15 | 20 June 15 - July 15 |
| 4 Coastal: Sept 1 - Oct 15
Piedmont: Aug 15 - Oct 1
Mountain Valleys:
Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 10 Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 16 North: Sept 25 - Nov 25
South: Oct 5 - Nov 30 | 21 July 15 - Aug 31 |
| 5 Aug 1 - Sept 30 | 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15 | 17 Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 22 July 1 - Aug 15 |
| 6 Aug 15 - Nov 1 | 12 North: Sept 5 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | | |

PLANTING DATES FOR WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

Use the map below as a guideline for when to plant Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus in your area. For best results, wait to plant until excessively hot, droughty summer weather has passed. Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus is highly cold-tolerant and designed to provide abundant forage from fall into spring in the southern U.S. and from fall into winter in colder climates

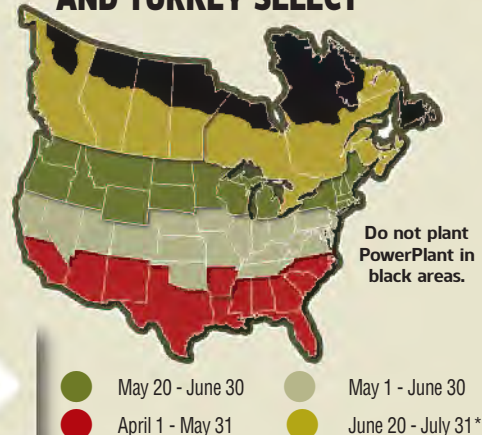


PLANTING DATES FOR WINTER-GREENS, TALL TINE TUBERS AND BEETS & GREENS

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------------|
| 1 Call for planting dates | 7 North: July 15 - Sept 15
South: Aug 1 - Oct 1 | 14 North: Sept 5 - Oct 30
Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | 17 July 15 - Sept 1 |
| 2 Call for planting dates | 8 July 5 - Aug 20 | 15 Coastal: Sept 1 - Oct 1
Piedmont: Aug 15 - Sept 20
Mountain Valleys:
Aug 5 - Sept 15 | 18 Aug 1 - Sept 30 |
| 3 July 1 - Sept 1 | 9 July 1 - Aug 30 | 16 North: Sept 15 - Nov 15
Central: Sept 25 - Nov 15
South: Oct 5 - Nov 30 | 19 July 1 - Aug 15 |
| 4 Coastal: Aug 15 - Sept 30
Southern Piedmont:
Aug 1 - Sept 15
Mountain Valleys:
July 15 - Sept 15 | 10 July 15 - Sept 15 | | 20 June 15 - Aug 1 |
| 5 July 15 - Sept 15 | 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15 | | 21 July 15 - Aug 31 |
| 6 Aug 1 - Oct 1 | 12 North: Sept 5 - Nov 1
Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15
South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | | 22 July 1 - Aug 15 |
| | 13 North: Aug 15 - Oct 1
South: Sept 5 - Oct 15 | | |

*Do not plant PowerPlant until soil temperatures reach a constant 65 degrees F. Wait as long as necessary for soil temperatures to reach a constant 65 degrees F before planting PowerPlant.

PLANTING DATES FOR IMPERIAL POWERPLANT AND TURKEY SELECT



Do not plant PowerPlant in black areas.

That rich quote might seem over the top, but it came to mind when I recalled some of the difficult weed control questions sent to us this past summer by Whitetail Institute customers. The gist of those questions involved a previously unknown weed species suddenly appearing in a food plot, and by the time the weed infestation was noticed, no remedial controls had any reasonable chance of success. Customer reactions ranged from disbelief to indignation. They were blindsided, and nobody can fault them for feeling that way. What is the source of these new weed species? Dormant weed seeds in the soil. The next question is 100 percent predictable: How did the seeds get there?

This article will address how seeds of annual weeds infest food plot sites. (Nuances of perennial weeds will be discussed in a later article.) Weeds in food plots, particularly those species in great abundance, came from seeds already present in the soil. Numbers of weed seed in the soil will be millions per acre or more. These seeds are artifacts from previous land use, whether the site was managed cropland, forest and anything between those extremes. Some seeds readily germinate when stimulated, and some remain dormant. Seed dormancy is a naturally occurring process that protects seed from germinating all at one time when growing conditions are marginal. Annoyingly, factors controlling weed seed dormancy remain one of the great mysteries of agricultural science. There are no reliable and practical ways to predict dormancy in weed seeds. Factors that break seed dormancy include temperature, day length, oxygen concentration in the soil and the integrity of the seed coat. The precise combination of factors that break weed seed dormancy remains a riddle, leading to what I call Pandora's box syndrome. In practice, every time a site is tilled for a food plot, whether new ground or a previously used site, a Pandora's box of weeds is opened. If you think you know what weeds to expect, eventually you will be unpleasantly surprised. There is no way to completely avoid the Pandora's box syndrome.

There is always potential for new weed species to be introduced into the food plot. Weed seed can be transported by wind, animals, birds and farm equipment, and as contaminants in crop seed. Bird transmission was clearly illustrated to me several years ago. At one time, I served as an ad-hoc crop consultant for a local peanut grower in exchange for fishing pond access. One season, I noticed a localized infestation of an invasive weed, benghal dayflower, around a lone pecan tree at the end of one field. Doves commonly roosted in the pecan tree, and their droppings deposited benghal dayflower seed in the field around the tree.

That was the epicenter on the farm of this introduced weed infestation. At the 2016 Weed Science Society of America conference, scientists from the University of Missouri reported that weed seed, particularly tiny pigweed seed, are readily ingested and excreted by wild ducks. These experiments were conducted according to strict guidelines set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. During one year, researchers sampled 238 wild ducks. Weed seeds were collected from the esophagus, gizzard and intestines and then planted in a greenhouse. Of the seed collected from the ducks, 14,400 plants emerged,


representing 50 plant species, including pigweeds. Making several liberal assumptions, multiply those numbers by the estimated wild duck population of 45 million birds, and the potential for pigweed seed spread is astronomical.

Considering that doves and waterfowl are typically migratory, it's easy to see how weeds like the invasive benghal dayflower and herbicide resistant pigweeds are quickly spread over a large area. In these examples, there's nothing that farmers or food plot hobbyists can do to prevent this form of weed seed spread. However, this knowledge makes food plotters aware of the potential problem, the need to closely monitor weed infestations and the need to be proactive in adjusting food-plot weed control programs.

Large-scale agriculture is mobile, particularly when you consider customized harvest operations that move cross-country as fiber and grain crops mature. Crop harvest is universally a dirty process, with trucks and machinery covered with soil that might contain weed seeds. The basic concept is the same with equipment used for food plots. Residual soil on tractors, ATVs, mowers and harrows might also contain weed seeds. As food plot equipment is moved, so are weed seeds. This man-made form of weed seed dispersal is easily avoided by sanitation. A pressure washer — even one at a manual carwash — is indispensable for preventing the introduction of new weed species into food plots.

Every year, concerns arise that unexpected or never-before-seen weeds came from weed seeds contaminating the food plot seed. Reputable seed sources adhere to strict guidelines for how seed crops are grown and handled. If you plant any of the Whitetail Institute seed products, you can be assured these products are grown to exacting standards and quality controls and will not introduce weed seeds to your food plots.

As mentioned, nothing can be done about wildlife transporting weed seeds. However, equipment sanitation and planting clean forage seed will ensure no accidental introduction of weed seeds. But that is only part of the solution. Tilling and preparing seedbeds several weeks or months before planting is a useful pre-planting practice that provides multiple benefits for stale seedbeds. During this prolonged period, shallow tillage will stimulate weed seed germination and provide clues on what weeds are present. Emerged weeds will be controlled by the next shallow tillage or an application of glyphosate. Ideally, stale seedbeds should be tilled at least three times before seeding the food plot. Stale seedbed weed control is a foundation crop-management practice commonly used on many specialty crops that have limited weed control tools. The same general condition exists for food plots, making stale seedbed weed control just as important in our area of mutual interest.

When dealing with unexpected weeds, it's important to avoid the plant-and-forget food plot management strategy. Monitor your food plots, especially early in the season, when weeds are small and much easier to control. Finally, be flexible in what you plant, along with your overall food plot management strategy. Being flexible and tweaking your overall food plot system might provide critical opportunities to control new weed problems and avoid a complete disaster. 

Birds readily consume and excrete weed seeds, especially small seeds. For example, doves ingest and spread seeds from benghal dayflower, an invasive and noxious weed of the southeastern United States coastal plain. Research in Georgia found that benghal dayflower seed collected from the crop of doves germinated at an average of 92 percent, and those collected from the gizzard germinated at an average of 45 percent. In this study, doves from one sample location in southern Georgia averaged 290 benghal dayflower seeds per bird. This relationship is common among many weed species and birds throughout the world.

Antler Building SUPPLEMENTS

from The Whitetail Institute

ATTRACTION & NUTRITION

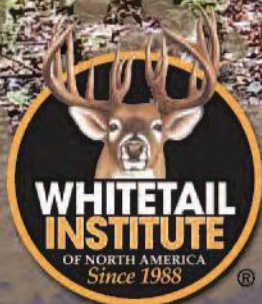
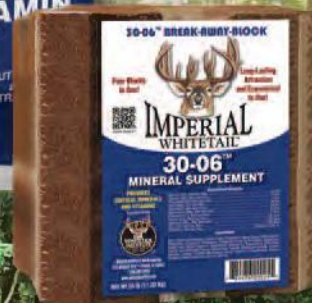
Like the protein found in Whitetail Institute food plot products, minerals and vitamins are also an essential part of the growth matrix of any deer, especially a buck. Hardened antlers are comprised largely of mineral, approximately 55 percent, and most soils in North America lack one or more of the minerals vital to antler development. When you consider that a buck re-grows antlers each year, you can understand why they require such high levels of minerals in their diet.

If you want your deer to thrive and help them reach more of their genetic potential, then mineral and vitamin supplementation is vital. 30-06 mineral and vitamin supplements are extremely attractive to deer. They are also designed by nutrition experts and are professionally formulated to provide the best nutrition possible for your deer. 30-06 is an extremely attractive and nutritional product, not a glorified salt product.



Antler Up D₃

Antler Up D₃ increases calcium and phosphorus uptake to promote growth and development of antlers. Promotes heavier body weights and improves the overall health of deer.



Whitetail Institute

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Research = Results®

Imperial Whitetail **PowerPlant**:

Make the Most of Limited Antler-Growing Time

By Jon Cooner

Institute Director of Special Projects

Most of us would get a lot more done if we used our time more wisely. That's especially true for hunters who want the bucks they hunt next fall to carry the largest antlers possible. Imperial Whitetail PowerPlant is the No. 1 forage tool you have specifically for providing bucks with the massive amounts of protein they need to help maximize antler size during the limited antler-growth period. And don't wait to order PowerPlant. The Whitetail Institute only produces a specific amount of PowerPlant each year, and supplies are almost always exhausted before demand has been met.

A Glance into Time's Rearview Mirror

What do you suppose marital life was like for a hunter in pre-historic times as he worked on constructing a new bow, fletching some new arrows and crafting broadheads in preparation for a hunting trip? A hunter would likely have been a man in those days, and his wife would likely have recognized the signs of his impending departure and reminded him, "Don't forget that you promised to help me clean up the cave before you leave. And the Johnsons are coming over for supper Saturday night, so you'll need to come home early."

I hope you got a chuckle out of that, because if you did, it means you can relate to that distant hunter's experience, and in doing so, you'll see my point: We hunters have always taken time to prepare ourselves for hunting season, and we always will. We check and repair our stands, have our hunting vehicles serviced and make sure that our bows and rifles are still shooting to point of aim. And the reason we still prepare for hunting season is also the same: to maximize our odds of hunting success.

Given all the effort hunters have always made to get themselves ready for hunting season, it surprises me that it took so long for hunters to start devoting the same effort to getting the animals they'll be hunting ready. Hunters have planted greenfields for generations to attract deer, but widespread use of food plots to improve the quality of deer didn't start until comparatively recently. Three markers best signal the start of that process, and all occurred in 1988: the founding of the Whitetail Institute, the introduction of Imperial Whitetail Clover, and the consolidation of knowledge and sciences involved in managing deer into a body commonly referred to as quality deer management.

Today, we have access to more detailed science and knowledge about deer management than ever before, including recognition of the substantial benefits of high-quality and high-protein food plots during spring and summer to help optimize deer health and maximize antler size. We also have the best forage tool for accomplishing that: Imperial Whitetail PowerPlant.

What PowerPlant Is

A brief description: PowerPlant is an annual food plot product the Whitetail Institute has developed to provide deer with exceptionally high levels of protein when they need it most: during spring and

summer. As we'll discuss, PowerPlant's design and components make it the top forage tool for supplementing protein for your deer.

Like other Whitetail Institute forage products, PowerPlant is a blend of multiple plant varieties: The reason this is so important will be obvious to anyone who has planted straight agricultural varieties of beans and peas for deer only to have them wiped out quickly. In most cases, blends of multiple plant varieties can help maximize overall performance of the forage stand. To do so, though, you must take great care to choose varieties that tolerate browsing better than agricultural varieties, that complement each other and that are then combined in the optimum ratios to maximize overall stand production. PowerPlant is one of the best examples of how well that works when done properly.

Components and Component Functions: Each of the plant varieties included in PowerPlant provides one or both of two functions: to act as a high-protein food source, and to provide the structure necessary for PowerPlant to grow as tall as it does.

Two of PowerPlant's components act strictly as food sources: forage soybeans and forage peas. Again, these are true forage varieties — and that's important to stand production and the ability to keep up with browsing pressure.

The soybeans in PowerPlant are a great example. There's no question that deer love soybean plants. Even so, there are several reasons why the soybeans in PowerPlant are superior to ag-type beans when used by deer as a food source. For example, unlike the tendency of ag-type beans to become tougher as they mature and the lignen content in them increases, the beans in PowerPlant grow as supple vines that remain tender and highly palatable to deer as they mature. Also, after the soybean plants in PowerPlant establish, they can even regenerate and continue to grow as deer feed on them, which is a huge advantage over ag-type beans, which can be devastated from early overbrowsing.

What PowerPlant Does

A brief description: PowerPlant provides deer with massive amounts of high-protein food during spring and summer in a form that remains highly palatable to deer as it matures and can withstand heavy browsing much better than straight plantings of agricultural beans or peas. You can see how important that is when you consider how little time bucks have to grow antlers, and that lack of protein in natural food sources is one of the biggest limiting factors to antler size.

A time limit — only 200 days for antler growth: No matter where you live, bucks only have about 200 days or less during spring and summer to grow antlers. That's an unalterable fact you can't change. In most free-range situations, though, you can improve the size of the antlers your bucks produce, and a major part of doing so is by increasing the amount of protein your deer consume during the antler-growing window.

Protein is especially important to the entire herd during spring and summer for overall herd health — pregnancy, antler growth and when does are providing milk for their fawns. During this same period, pro-

tein is equally critical to the rest of the herd. Doe milk is extremely high in nutrients, including protein. Exactly how much protein deer need during spring and summer is a matter of debate, but it's generally recognized that bucks require about 16 percent protein when building their antlers, does about 18 percent when they're lactating and fawns up to 20 percent (some of which they get from their mothers' milk). To be clear, these are the optimum levels — amounts required to help deer reach more of their genetic potential.

Unfortunately, natural forages of spring and summer are generally very low in protein. And to make matters even worse, most natural forages quickly become tough and of less utility to deer, which require tender forages due to their small ruminant digestive system, and their availability to deer drops off sharply during summer.


Even with these lower protein levels and lack of consistent availability, deer can survive, and bucks can grow antlers, but a manager who wants to push his deer as far as their genetic blueprints allow will have to supplement the protein shortfall. As we've discussed, PowerPlant does that by providing huge amounts of high-protein forage for deer — protein that's highly palatable and able to withstand browsing pressure.

Getting the Most Out of Your PowerPlant

Don't plant PowerPlant too early: Do not plant PowerPlant until soil temperatures have warmed to at least 65 degrees day and night. Beans and peas are among the most fragile seeds and can be severely damaged if planted in cool soil.

Plant enough PowerPlant (based on deer density): In spite of

its prolific growth, even PowerPlant can be overgrazed if subjected to extreme pressure in its early stages of growth. Accordingly, the Whitetail Institute recommends these as minimums based on deer density.

Minimum Recommended Plot Sizes and Seeding Rates	
	High Deer Density Areas Plant at least 1.5 acre of PowerPlant at a seeding rate of 50 lbs. per 1.5 acres.
	Low to Medium Deer Density Areas Plant at least 1 acre of PowerPlant at a seeding rate of 25 lbs. per 1 acre.

Also, you can spray PowerPlant after planting with Arrest Max to control early grass competition: If grass invades your PowerPlant plot soon after planting, spray Arrest Max to control it. Be sure to check the Arrest Max label for a list of grasses Arrest Max will control. You can also go to whitetailinstitute.com to find the Arrest Max label as well as a set of easy-to-follow instructions for mixing the spray solution.

Finally, don't delay in ordering if you want all the benefits PowerPlant offers for Spring and Summer. As mentioned, The Whitetail Institute produces a specific amount of PowerPlant each year, and in most years, demand exceeds supply. For information about PowerPlant or to place an order, call (800) 688-3030. 🦌

PowerPlant®

... a spring/summer annual that produces high protein and massive tonnage.

Deer love fresh spring legumes. So much, in fact, that they can clean out an entire planting before the plants are even established. The mix of high-protein annuals in PowerPlant better withstand heavy browsing to produce a high-tonnage crop that continues to thrive throughout the heat of summer, providing deer with not only excellent forage, but with attractive bedding areas as well. In university testing, PowerPlant produced more tonnage per acre than any other spring/summer annual tested. Deer will come for the succulent plants and stay to bed and spend more time on your property.

The New PowerPlant now includes Sunn Hemp that produces even more protein and is Arrest MAX APPROVED which helps you control competing grasses within your PowerPlant plots.

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DON'T CUT CORNERS WITH PERENNIAL FORAGE MAINTENANCE

By **Jon Cooner**
Director of Special Projects

Whitetail Institute food plot products set the industry standard for performance, and the planting dates and instructions on the back of product bags make it easy for you to get the most out of them. If you've planted a Whitetail Institute perennial, you might have noticed a section at the bottom of the instructions that sets out recommended steps for forage maintenance. They're extremely important, so don't skip them. The instructions are also available at whitetailinstitute.com.

An Essential Understanding

The maintenance instructions for each Whitetail Institute perennial include recommendations for mowing, keeping soil pH and fertility levels optimum, and controlling weeds (including grass). Even though each of these topics is addressed separately, they are interdependent. They work together toward a common purpose: maximizing the quality and longevity of perennial forage stands. And that means skipping any of them can reduce the effect of the others. Keep that in mind as you read this article, because we'll touch on it again.

Arrest Max, Slay and Sure-Fire Crop Oil Plus

No matter how good a job you did when you prepared your seedbed and planted, grass and weeds will often show up again at some point. It's just the way Mother Nature works, and if you don't take timely action to control weeds and grasses, the quality and the longevity of the stand will be compromised.

The good news is that Whitetail Institute offers Arrest Max, Slay and Sure-Fire Crop Oil Plus to help food plotters control grasses and broadleaf weeds in perennial forage stands.

Arrest Max and Slay

Arrest Max and Slay are small-weed herbicides, meaning they deliver optimum results in controlling labeled grasses and weeds that are actively growing but still young. That's why it's important to spray in a timely manner — as soon as grasses and other weeds have emerged and are starting to actively grow, but before they mature if possible.

Arrest Max is designed to control most kinds of grass, and it can be used in any Whitetail Institute perennial forage stand, in any other clover or alfalfa stand, and in the Whitetail Institute's PowerPlant annual. Slay is designed to control a few types of grass and most kinds of broadleaf weeds, and it can be used in Imperial Whitetail Clover and any other clover or alfalfa stand.

Arrest Max and Slay can also be used in other types of forage stands, but not all, so if you are planning to spray Arrest Max and/or Slay in a forage stand other than the types specified, check the herbicide labels to make sure the forage is listed as an approved crop. You can find the Arrest Max and Slay labels on the package. You can also find them, along with an easy-to-follow set of instructions for mixing the spray solutions, at whitetailinstitute.com.

Sure-Fire Crop Oil Plus

Sure-Fire is a type of adjuvant, meaning something designed to be added to a herbicide spray solution when it's mixed to maximize the effectiveness of the herbicide. Sure-Fire is designed to be tank-mixed with post-emergence herbicides such as Arrest Max and Slay, which enter grasses and weeds through their actively growing leaves. Specifically, Sure-Fire helps wet and spread the herbicide on the weed's leaves, helps the herbicide stick to them and aids with penetration. The addition of an adjuvant such as Sure-Fire is required by the Slay label for Slay to work. Although it isn't mandatory to add Sure-Fire to your Arrest Max spray solution, doing so is highly recommended, especially when you're dealing with tougher perennial or mature grasses.

Maintenance Mowing

Another recommendation you'll find in every perennial product's maintenance recommendations concerns mowing. Generally, mow your Whitetail Institute perennial food plots a few times each spring and into summer any time you see anything growing in the plot (forage plants, weeds or grasses) starting to flower or make seeds. When you mow, don't take more than a couple of inches off the tops of the forage plants, and don't mow them lower than about 6 to 8 inches tall. Mowing more than a few inches off the forage plants at a time can stress them, and it can also speed up the rate at which moisture evaporates from the soil. And of course, don't mow the forage plants when they're stressed, such as during periods of excessively hot or dry weather.

There are several reasons to mow Whitetail Institute perennial food plots. The most important is weed control. Most of the weeds in our food plots are annuals that rely on flowering and reseeding to remain in the plots from one year to the next. Thankfully, most annual weeds grow sufficiently upright to let us mow them whenever we see them starting to flower or put on seed heads. Your weed control purpose in mowing is to stop the flowering process before the seeds in weed flowers and seed heads become viable.

Mowing also helps keep perennial food plots as lush, attractive and nutritious as possible. One way mowing does that is to prevent the forage plants from expending the tremendous amounts of energy it takes to flower and produce seed. (Whitetail Institute perennials don't have to reseed to keep producing for years). A second way mowing helps keep perennials such as Imperial Whitetail Clover as lush and vigorously growing as possible is by prompting the forage plants to put on more foliage at lower levels.

Maintaining Optimum Soil pH and Fertility

Finally, make sure that soil pH and fertility levels stay within optimum range. The best way to make sure you know exactly where those levels are, and how much lime and fertilizer to add if they're low, is to perform a laboratory soil test. The maintenance instructions for each Whitetail Institute perennial make default recommendations, but a soil test will be much more accurate. That assures that you get precisely the lime and fertilizer you need and that you don't waste money buying lime and fertilizer you don't need.

Tying it All Together

Remember the essential understanding mentioned at the start of this article? If you kept that in mind as you read, you might have noticed ways in which the maintenance recommendations work together to maximize the quality and longevity of your perennial plantings. For example, soil pH and fertility relate to weed control. Specifically, weeds tend to establish where the plot is thin, and making sure soil pH and fertility stay within optimum ranges helps keep the plot as thick as possible, leaving less room for weeds. Likewise, weed control helps keep the forage stand as lush and thick as possible by keeping weeds from taking up root space.

As you can see, it all works together, so it's wise to make sure you don't cut corners on perennial maintenance. 🦌

Ensure the success of your food plots.

TREATED **UNTREATED**

Whitetail Institute herbicides protect your investment by making sure that the plants you have so carefully planted can flourish by winning the competition battle with grasses and weeds for root space, nutrients and moisture. Arrest Max controls most grasses and can be used on all Whitetail Institute perennials or other clover, alfalfa or chicory. Slay controls broadleaf weeds, and can be used on clover or alfalfa. Both herbicides are extensively field-tested and can be easily applied by 4-wheeler or tractor sprayer.

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MENTORS AND MEMORIES:

Saying Farewell to Two of My Favorite People

By Steve Scott

I write this early in January 2018 and with a heavy heart. My emotions are all over the place. 2017 brought so many blessings that there are too many to list. But two things that were blessings that I am incredibly thankful for became crystal clear in my mind at a sad time.

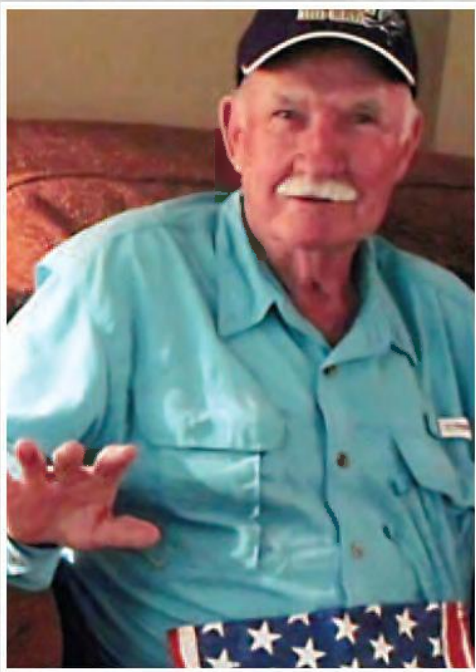
I don't know about you but I feel we are lucky in life if we have a handful of people that have a long-lasting and profound impact on our lives. I know I'm one of those lucky ones. Sadly, I lost two of my heroes in 2017. One of these men, very few of you will have ever heard of. Most likely, nearly every one of you are familiar with the other man.

John Nichols

When I was about ten years old, I got to know a friend of my dad, John Nichols. Mr. Nichols had a daughter but didn't have a son. I'm not sure how I became the lucky one but about that time he became a second dad to me. He was one of the most influential people in helping me develop a passion for hunting. We started off hunting dove, quail and squirrels and soon moved on to deer. He took my dad and I countless times and when my dad couldn't go, he'd take me anyway.

I remember what was probably our first real deer hunt together. We sat on the ground leaning up against a big pine tree side by side. I vividly remember that after 15 minutes or so had passed, I was thinking we were not in a good deer hunting spot. We had seen nothing. On the way home, Mr. Nichols taught me a valuable deer hunting lesson when he said, "If you want to kill a deer, you need to stop breaking sticks and throwing them at pine cones".

I was with him when I killed my first deer in 1973. We had so much



fun and there are so many stories to tell about the deer we killed, the fun we had at the hunting camp and the food, well the food may have been the best part of all.

You see, Mr. Nichols wasn't a "chef" he was far and above any chef. He could cook anything and it would be great but breakfast with his cat-head biscuits and gravy should have a documentary done on it.

Mr. Nichols was also one of the first McGyver's — he could build or fix anything. I saw him do amazing things many times.

He was a fine man. A man of faith who loved his family dearly.

We fished together all over the place from small farm ponds to some desolate areas of Mexico and Canada. And as good of a hunter as Mr. Nichols was, he was probably even a better fisherman. The man had no quit in him. He could catch fish when the fish weren't biting.

Mr. Nichols passed away Feb. 8, 2017. He was one of my heroes, a mentor and one of my favorite people on earth. I will always be more grateful than words can express for all the things Mr. Nichols did for me that he certainly didn't have to. I'll miss him greatly.

Hopefully you've had a "Mr. Nichols" in your life and I hope you can be a "Mr. Nichols" for others.

Charles J. Alsheimer

The Christmas holidays were awesome for me this year with both my sons and my daughter-in-law being back home. We had a great time together eating, visiting, laughing and eating some more.

But the joy of the holiday season took a big hit December 30, 2017. About 7:00 that night I listened to a voicemail from a friend that told me Charlie Alsheimer had passed away. It was a kick in the gut. The news hit me real hard.

I had just talked to Charlie on Dec. 19th. I called to thank him for a personal letter he had just sent me. I told him it was the greatest Christmas gift I had ever received because it was. He was in great spirits despite the health issues he had encountered throughout 2017. I've been blessed to have had 100's of conversations with Charlie over the years and I can not remember a single time that I didn't feel better about life in general when I got off the phone. He was a gift to me.

Books could be written about the many things Charlie accomplished and the accolades he's received in his life. He was a legend in the hunting industry. His writing and photography skills were phenomenal.

In January 2000, *Deer & Deer* Hunting magazine readership voted Charlie as the third most inspirational personality from the 1900's. But beyond his professional gifts and the excellence he strived for and achieved, it is the MAN HE WAS and the way he lived his life that was the most inspiring and impressive to me. Charlie Alsheimer was a class act in every way. He was a mentor to me and many others. He was a veteran and a patriot who loved our country. He was one of the best men I've ever known. He loved his family as much as a man possibly can. Despite his many accomplishments, he was an extremely humble man, one of my favorite traits in people.

I'm going to remember Charlie for all of the above and much more but the No. 1 thing I'm going to remember him for was his faith. He and my mom were two of the most influential people in my life when it comes to my faith. Charlie not only profoundly affected me but he shared his faith with thousands of people through seminars and hundreds of thousands through his writing. I know from reading comments on social media these past few days, Charlie Alsheimer helped sow the seed of faith in many people. What a tremendous mark to



leave on the world.

It was an honor to call John Nichols and Charlie Alsheimer friends. I'm thankful for the blessing of knowing them. I'll miss them terribly but I'll smile when I think of them and remember how lucky I was to have had them in my life. If you have someone who had a profound impact on your life and they are still around, I encourage you to pick up the phone now and call them or even better yet, go see them and tell them what they mean to you and give them a hug. I wish I could. Rest in peace my friends. I love you both.

Here are a few quotes from others about Charlie Alsheimer

"The impact that Charlie Alsheimer had on the deer hunting world cannot be overstated. His insights on deer behavior were generations ahead of their time. His knowledge on deer hunting was unparalleled. And his views on conservation rank up there with the all-time greats — Roosevelt, Leopold and Sigurd Olson, et al. Above all, Alsheimer's impact as a man of faith will resonate as his lasting legacy. Rest in Heaven, my dear friend. You have showed us the way in so many ways" — Dan Schmidt, Editor-in-Chief *Deer & Deer Hunting*

• • •

"Outstanding photographer; excellent writer; one of the nation's foremost whitetail experts; top-notch seminar speaker; TV personality, a truth hunter; devoted husband, father, and friend; gifted athlete; devoted Christian. All these words accurately describe the life of Charles J. Alsheimer.

My wife, Miss Carol, and I called him Mr. Charlie and we were long-distance friends for over 25 years, speaking weekly. We were both photographers and writers in the outdoor field, but he helped me all he could, and I helped him all I could. Rather quickly, we developed a deep love for Mr. Charlie and his family, and they blessed us with their love.

Although he worked extremely hard at his vocation, Mr. Charlie's greatest joy was in telling others about the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women will be in Heaven because Charles J. Alsheimer allowed God to work through him in a mighty way in his writing and photography, and in the hundreds of deer hunting seminars he did throughout the years.


Surely Mr. Charlie has now heard those words that only God can speak: "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

And I'll close my tribute to our dear friend Mr. Charlie in the manner he frequently closed a correspondence with: Proverbs 3:5-6." — Brad Herndon

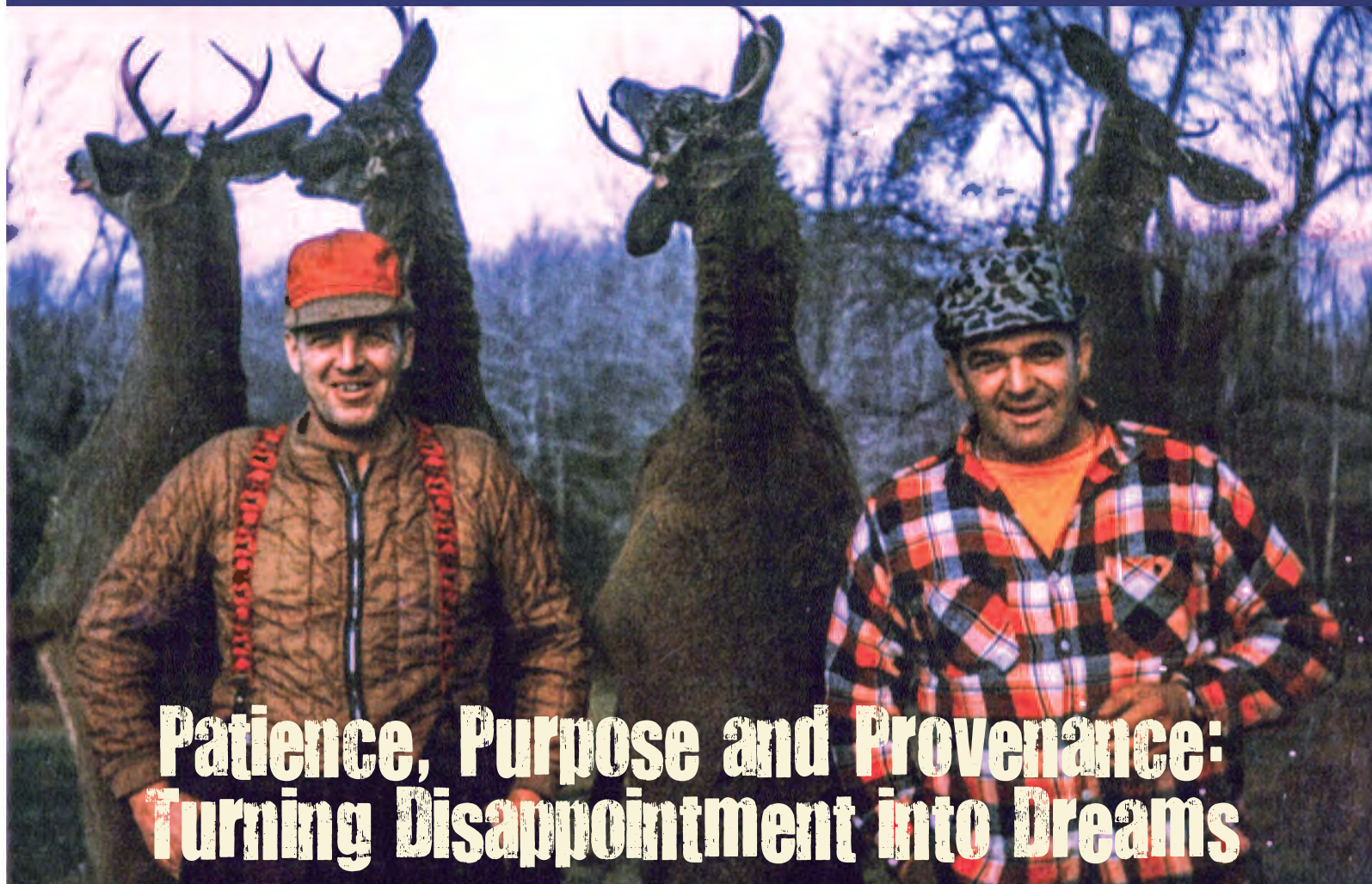
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"In the landscape of life, each man has a few tall trees — father figures and examples of life well-lived. For me, Charlie was one of those tall trees, and I've tried to pattern much of my life as a husband, father, author, and speaker after his example. When a tall tree falls it leaves a gaping hole in the canopy, and Charlie's death has hit me hard these past few weeks. It's also making me long for Heaven that much more." — Zeke Pipher

• • •

"I have had the great honor of working with Charlie for nearly 25 years. As impressive as he was as a photographer, writer and whitetail spokesman, he was an even better man. He was a mentor and a friend whom I'll dearly miss." — Bart Landsverk, Editor *Whitetail News* 

My grandfather, left in this undated photo, with the typical farm-fed deer we once enjoyed at our camp.



Patience, Purpose and Provenance: Turning Disappointment into Dreams

By Kristopher M. Klemick

Photos by the Author

When I think about this hobby, sport and lifestyle I hold so dear, it eases my nerves. Time in the woods has a natural way of calming the soul. Yet when you throw a mature whitetail into the picture, those calm nerves go out the window, don't they?

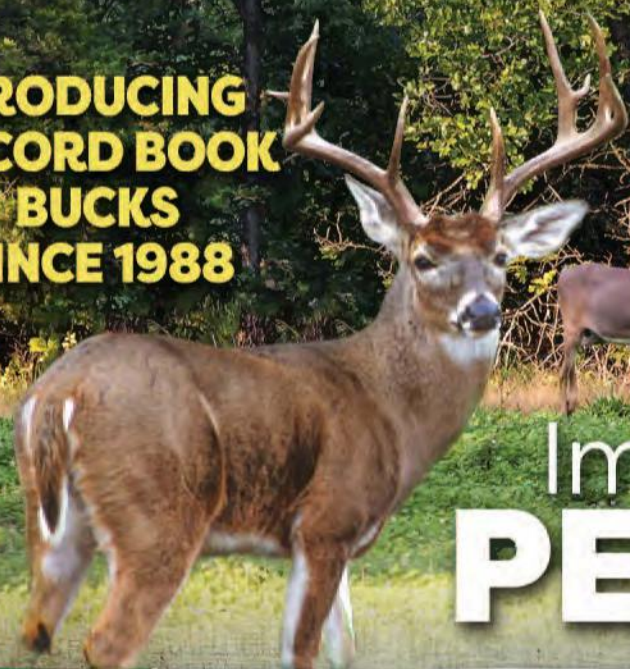
I grew up in an outdoor-grounded family, and I'm grateful for that. I wouldn't have had it any other way. I often wonder how people who've never experienced an incredible sunrise from beneath a snow-laden hemlock or tall, majestic white oak as acorns drop from the sky can claim their lives are fulfilled. There's just something about stepping into the woods that's like nothing else. The experience is so natural, so invigorating, that — who am I kidding? I don't have to tell you. You already know. Although the purpose and level of involvement varies, we share passion for the outdoors.

From the time I was old enough to join my father in the stand, I anxiously awaited opening day. I'm blessed to have a place of my own where I can escape the noise, aggravations and hustle and bustle of today's all-too-common distractions. You see, 60 years ago, my grandfather and several of his closest friends grew tired of hunting public ground. They wanted a place of their own, where they wouldn't have to worry about another hunter setting up 30 yards from their stump, hacking, coughing and carrying on. So, dedicated to the cause, each week when they'd get together at the local VFW, they contributed money to a jar until they saved enough to buy our little slice of heaven in Tioga County, Pennsylvania.

The nearly 250-acre property included an old farmhouse with busted windows and doors, but that didn't matter. They finally had a place to hang their deer. I recall the tale of a guy falling out a broken second-story window. Everyone heard a thud outside, and then moments later, the guy walked in, covered in snow. Everyone roared with laughter when they realized what had happened.

Our deer camp was alive and thriving back then. Hunters won big, as the deer herd was still healthy. For two weeks in rifle season, almost two dozen men would call camp home. Weather on the mountain has

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These two photos provide a great comparison. The one on the left shows a typical mountain-fed buck of the 1990s, harvested by the authors' grandfather. The other, illustrated by the author's camp-record 9-pointer, shows the type of bucks camp members can see today, thanks to our members dedication to managing the land and using Whitetail Institute products.

always been challenging. In hours, you can experience 60-degree sunshine and blue skies but then wind, rain and six inches of snow. As a youngster hunting alone, I vividly recall falling asleep in my stand wearing just a camo T-shirt, and then waking up covered in snow a brief time later as my dad began climbing the tree to check on me.

You could always count on a roaring fire in the wood stove, consistently throwing 80-degree heat up from the basement as outside temperatures struggled in the single digits. Yet the windows were always open, as was the back door, as friends stopped by with bologna and cheese platters to laugh and carry on. Upstairs, the camp cook would have a massive spread of food laid out. Football played on one of the few TV channels we could get atop the mountain, and you were lucky if you could find a seat. Four couches, just as many recliners and a dining table that seats 30 were always taken. In the basement, it was much the same. The bar was always stocked, beer flowed freely through taps on the wall and a huge poker table was constantly alive. I remember earning quarters from everyone for every beer run I made.

Those were the times. Each year, hunters harvested deer, and there was seldom an open hook on the back porch. As children, we were always filling corn feeders or shoveling apple plumbings from the local farm to help the herd. The guys even tried their hand at planting a few apple trees, but the trees only survived a few years, victims of harsh winters, a short growing season and overall poor conditions.

As the 1980s wore on and the '90s gave way to a new century, all but a few of the founding members remained with us. You'd think the children, then young adults with children of their own, would be tripping over deer, but that wasn't the case. Farm fields that once dotted the landscape were reclaimed by the forest. The coal industry had long since burnt itself out, and the old New York Central railroad tracks that had snaked through town had been pulled up decades earlier, leaving miles of vast shale pits.

Suffice to say, habitat in our part of Pennsylvania went from good to bad, and we didn't even realize how challenging it had become. The mountain took back what was once hers, and we were seeing fewer deer. Those we encountered were smaller and living "paycheck to paycheck."

Patience and Purpose are Critical

In the early '90s, long before food plots went mainstream, we took the only three acres on our property that wasn't mature forest and planted corn and alfalfa to help our deer herd. Through the years, we tried other crops from various suppliers, but nothing proved to be a standout winner.

One night, after a long day on stand having seen nothing but squirrels and chickadees, I thought something needed to change. We couldn't go on like that. Every year since camp had been incorporated, we've had a sign-in book, and that night I wrote, "Time to start managing the land! Bring the game back; maintain and sustain!" At that point, we started doing some serious homework. We read books, subscribed to magazines, attended seminars to hear people such as Charlie Alsheimer talk about whitetail deer, and began working on our long-term plan to reinvent hunting in the Pennsylvania mountain country, where the landscape is unforgiving.

We built several new feeders, planted a 25-tree apple orchard, established several mineral sites and began to lay the foundation for our habitat-management program. Instead of just tossing down some lime once in a while, we actively monitored our soil and made the necessary adjustments to better support the crops we planted. In addition, we produced and distributed a nearly 30-page habitat-management program guide to the membership. We knew change wouldn't happen overnight but were confident the steps we were taking would get us where we wanted to be.

The Provenance of Our Success

Eventually, we eliminated the crops and seed blends with which we'd experienced mediocre results and settled on a company that was a proven winner: The Whitetail Institute of North America. Soon, our mineral sites and food plots were seeing consistent activity, as recorded by our trail cameras. Fawns we'd watched since summer were growing, and the half dozen does on the property were readying their bodies for winter when something dawned on us like a bright,

beautiful May morning. Just as it had gone unnoticed for so long when the condition of our habitat spiraled downward, the steps we were taking to improve our property were producing results.

Thanks to a lot of blood, sweat and tears, the habitat-management plan was coming together. We had established mineral sites, natural water supplies, appropriate all-season food sources and plenty of thick cover for bedding sanctuaries. Not during the previous 30 years had we amassed such a herd; six spikes, several 4- and 6-points, a pair of impressive 8-points and an 11-point, the likes of which we'd never seen.

By hunting season, we were seeing deer morning, noon and night. The results were so exciting I actually passed a 32-yard shot at the biggest 8-point I'd ever seen and a 38-yard shot at that massive 11-point. Crazy? You'd better believe it. Insane for not taking the shot? Absolutely not. In my defense, I'd only been an archery hunter a few weeks when I picked up my first bow, an old model given to me by my uncle, who got it from my dad back in the day. Funny how things come full circle. I didn't feel comfortable shooting beyond 30 yards, and I wasn't about to take a haphazard shot, so I simply put the bow down and soaked in both experiences.

At one point, we counted more than 21 deer in our Whitetail Institute Winter-Greens. Never had I witnessed that many deer on our property, and it was thanks to a little bit of purpose-driven patience and a company that understands and shares our value of appreciation for the outdoors.

December was the highlight of the year. On the second day of rifle season, as driving wind, sleet and snow kicked up, a massive 9-point worked across the property, headed for one of our Whitetail Institute

Tall Tine Tuber food plots. The buck had a 17-3/4-inch spread, and members of our camp have suggested it's the largest deer ever harvested in the 57 years we've been on the mountain.

Habitat management isn't just about adding inches to antlers, though. It's about being a responsible steward and passing the land to the next generation so your children can enjoy what was entrusted to you. The principles on which the Whitetail Institute was founded in 1988 and that continue to drive the company will help you accomplish all that and more. They're part of the reason we've experienced such success. Nowhere else in the industry will you find such talented and dedicated people behind a company.

Have a question about food plots? Stumped about soil? Mineral or attractant confusion? No matter your question, you can find help simply by picking up the phone and dialing (800) 688-3030. Doing so will put you in touch with a professional in-house consultant who will take the time to answer all of your questions. It doesn't matter if you've never planted a bag of seed. The call and service are free, and I guarantee this: Make as many calls as you need, and in two years of using Whitetail Institute products, you'll see a night-and-day difference and be a member of the Whitetail Institute team for life.

The Whitetail Institute's slogan is, "Research equals Results," and those aren't empty words thrown out because they sound good. Decades of research, resources and proven results support that claim. Putting these guys to work for you will be one of the best things you can do to improve whitetail habitat. With a little patience and purpose, the Whitetail Institute of North America can help deliver on your dreams — enjoying time in the woods with big, mature whitetails. 🦌

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LIME - the difference between success and failure

By **Whitetail Institute Staff**

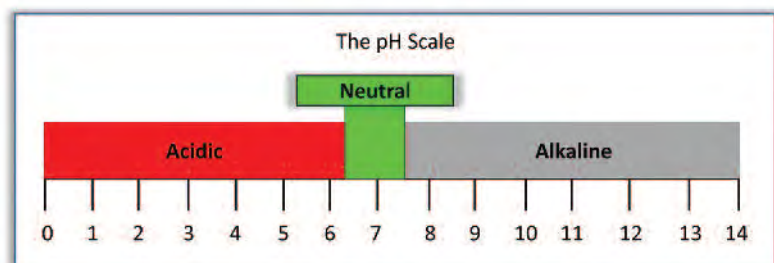
These days, most folks understand how important it is to make sure you'll be planting in soil that has neutral soil pH. Most fallow soils, though, are acidic (not optimum) and need lime added to the seedbed to raise the pH. The best move you can make to ensure food plot success this year is to perform a laboratory soil test now, and add any lime recommended in the report to the seedbed right away. This simple and inexpensive step can be the difference between the best food plot you can imagine and total failure.

If you're planning on planting this spring and your soil pH is a little low, the Whitetail Institute has you covered with specific forage options that can tolerate lower soil pH that's rising due to lime application. And if you're planning on planting this coming fall, the lime you add this spring should have plenty of time to get your soil pH to neutral by then. Either way, your goal should be to find out what your soil pH is before planting, and add any lime recommended as soon as you can.

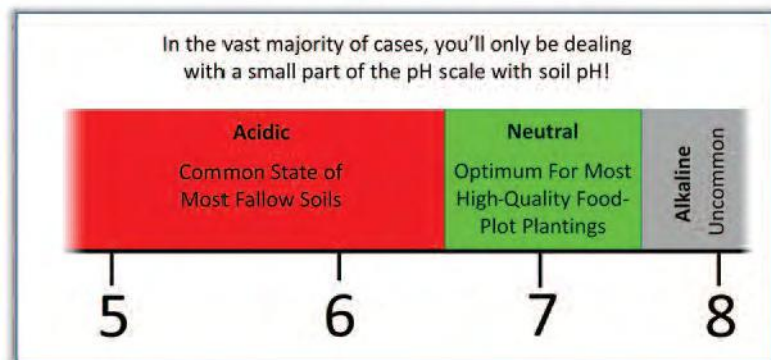
What is Soil pH?

If you're dreading the possibility that I'm going to get into a highly technical, scientific explanation of soil pH, don't worry. While some folks overcomplicate it, soil pH is very simple to understand in terms of what it means, and why it's so critical to food plot success.

In simplest terms, soil pH is just a number on a scale from 0-14 (the pH scale). Depending on where the soil pH number for the soil in your seedbed falls on that scale, your soil pH can be described as acidic, neutral, or alkaline.



Now, let's make it even easier. With soil pH, you'll almost certainly be dealing with a small range of numbers on the pH Scale: about the "low 4s" up to about 8. As mentioned, most fallow soils are acidic and will be below 6.5 pH. The optimum soil pH range for most high-quality food plot plantings is within neutral range: 6.5-7.5. Highly alkaline soils are fairly rare.



What Does Determining the Soil pH of the Soil in Your Seedbed Tell You?

Here too, the answer is easy: determining the soil pH of the soil in your plot tells you whether or not your planting will be able to freely uptake nutrients from the soil which will allow your food plots to flourish, be attractive as possible and produce as much tonnage and nutrition as possible.

Most high-quality food plot plantings are able to freely access nutrients in the soil only if soil pH is "neutral" (6.5 to about 7.5) – and that applies to nutrients that are already in the soil as well as those you add by putting out fertilizer. As we mentioned earlier, soil pH of most fallow soils is "acidic" (below 6.5), which results in some of the nutrients in the soil being inaccessible to high-quality forage plants. If the soil in which you'll be planting is acidic, it should be limed as soon as possible to bring soil pH up before planting. It takes time for lime to have full effect, so a smart move would be to perform a laboratory soil test now, add any lime recommended in the report to the seedbed, and lightly disk or till it in right away.

As you can see, it's very important to know what your soil pH number is — exactly. In addition, all soils don't have the same ability to hold lime activity, so it's also important to scientifically analyze the characteristics of the specific soil in each of your plots to know exactly how much lime to add if the soil is acidic. Only a qualified soil testing laboratory can tell you both of those things.

The Consequences of Planting in Acidic Soil. As you can imagine, this can present problems with forage growth. Like other living things, plants need to be able to freely uptake nutrients to grow as well as they should. As we mentioned earlier, if high-quality forage plants are planted in acidic soil, they won't be able to access all the nutrients they need. That's why one of the main symptoms of low soil pH is slowed forage growth.

Second, also consider the impact of that on your wallet. As an example, if you bought \$100 worth of fertilizer, and then fertilized and planted in a seedbed with 5.0 soil pH, the forage plants would only be able to uptake about half the fertilizer you put out. In other words, you'd be flushing about \$50 down the drain – and it's even worse when you consider that you could have used that money to perform a laboratory soil test and lime the seedbed to raise soil pH before you planted. (It's a no-brainer.)

Precision: Laboratory Soil Testing

As previously mentioned, when you test your soil, make sure that the kit you use involves sending a sample of your soil to a qualified soil-testing laboratory. All soils are different — some are heavy, some are light, and some hold lime activity much better than others. That's why the Whitetail Institute does not recommend cheap do-it-yourself probe and slurry testers that don't involve laboratory soil analysis. Soil test kits generally cost around \$15. And chances are that you'll more than make that back in lime and fertilizer savings compared to what you'll have to put on to be sure you covered the bases without the test. Also, adding excess fertilizer won't make up for inadequate soil pH.

The Whitetail Institute soil test kit offers full laboratory analysis, and the report is easy to follow. You can find out more about it at whitetailinstitute.com or by calling (800) 688-3030.

It's also preferable to perform a laboratory soil test rather than rely on the general default lime recommendations you'll find in any set of Whitetail Institute seedbed-preparation instructions. The following

example is from the instructions for Imperial Whitetail Clover:

Seedbed Preparation Instructions

If possible, perform Step 1 several months in advance of planting.

1. **Adjust soil pH if low.** If possible, perform a laboratory soil test well in advance of planting, add any lime recommended in the lab's report to the seedbed. If you don't test your soil with a laboratory soil test, then add 2 tons of lime per acre. **Thoroughly disk or till the lime into the top 3 or 4 inches of the soil. Do not skip this step! Making sure soil is at optimum soil pH before you plant is extremely important!**

As you can see, the Whitetail Institute provides general default lime recommendations for situations in which a laboratory soil test isn't done. As you may realize by now, though, properly testing your soil before planting is well worth the small effort involved. That's because only a soil testing laboratory can give you lime and fertilizer recommendations that are extremely precise, while the default recommendations in the instructions are generalized to cover most situations, and the odds that the default recommendations are exactly correct for your specific seedbed are low. The same is true of fertilizer, for which the Whitetail Institute also provides general default recommendations.

Also, remember that the better you work the lime into the soil with a disk or tiller, the better and faster it can work. Your goal is to mix the lime with soil as thoroughly as possible and into the top four to six inches of soil. Even so, it will take time for lime to take full effect on soil pH. You should consider doing a laboratory soil test any time you're considering buying lime or fertilizer. 🌱



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Celebrate the FUSION

By Scott Bestul

The plot, a quarter-acre chunk of creek-bottom perfection, is a spot where I've never killed a deer. If you're wondering why, it's because I've spent a lot of time there over the years, experimenting with different plantings, and giving my trail cameras a workout.

The reasons I love this plot so much are simple: I have a mock scrape on its edge that provides some of the best buck pictures I get every season. It also has good soil, so the plot serves as the perfect place for me to test different forage plantings each year. In short, it's already a place bucks want to go, so the better the food plot is that season, the better the pics I get on my cameras.

When spring rolled around two years ago, I seeded the plot to Imperial Whitetail Fusion, which is a blend of the newest Imperial Whitetail Clover and the Whitetail Institute's WINA-100 chicory. The deer were attracted to the Fusion very quickly, they focused most heavily on the clover early, and they began to heavily utilize the chicory too as summer morphed into fall. I soon realized that by planting my favorite food plot to Fusion, I'd made it better than ever before.

Real-World Results

Another huge fan of Fusion is Jason Say, a veteran hunter from northwest Pennsylvania and developer of *Wired Outdoors* an online portal for whitetail nuts and outdoorsman of all types.

"I started planting Fusion as soon as it became available," Jason says. "Last year, I planted 14 plots here in Pennsylvania. Six of them were devoted totally or partially to Fusion. Last fall, my wife and my daughter shot their first deer ever while hunting a Fusion plot, so that alone would make me a pretty big fan."

Say is a veteran food plotter who knows how to grow forages that

attract deer. "Fusion grows best in good soil that holds moisture," he said. "And like any food plot, a successful Fusion plot will be one where you decide to do everything right. Here in Pennsylvania, we have rocky soils left in the wake of strip mining for coal. It isn't deep, dark soil like they have in the Midwest. So, getting the soil ready for a plot is a process.

"I also preach this hard to people: soil test, lime and fertilize. We do laboratory soil tests through the Whitetail Institute, and then follow the lab's recommendations for lime and fertilizer," Say says. "Without a soil test, you're left to just playing the odds that your plot will be successful. Some guys stare at you with a blank look and never seem to get it. People who nod their heads and do the hard work of preparation, though, are invariably happy with their results. I know we sure are."

Seeding Fusion is a fairly easy process," Say notes. "Like other Whitetail Institute perennials, Fusion is a blend of small seeds, which should be left on top of the prepared seedbed. The planting instructions on the bag tell you exactly how to do that. [Editor's Note: The Seedbed Preparation and Planting Instructions for each Whitetail Institute food plot product can also be found at whitetailinstitute.com.]

Because he's a deer hunter as much as a deer farmer, Say has experimented to see what works best for whitetails in his


hunting area. "I almost always split my plots between annual and perennial plantings," he said. "Part of the reason is that I've learned some sort of rotation is preferable. You can't grow good annuals — like Winter-Greens, which is one of my favorites — year after year in the same plot. You plant them for a season or two and then shift that section of the plot into perennials for a while to let the soil recover.

"Another benefit to splitting plots is it helps increase the attraction of deer to that area even further by adding variety. Regardless of the phase of the season, you've got something growing there that whitetails prefer. In the early season here, deer gravitate toward perennials like Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion. As fall progresses and colder weather sets in, their preference often shifts toward annuals like Winter-Greens and Beets and Greens. Splitting the plot

into two different products helps ensure variety and keeps deer close by during both the early and late seasons."

Conclusion

As I mentioned earlier, one reason Jason is such a big fan of Fusion is that his wife and daughter shot their first deer ever while hunting a Fusion plot. To that he adds, "The quality of my deer has substantially improved since I've been planting food plots. I killed my best buck ever last fall. A great 154-inch Pennsylvania buck."

Like Jason, I've been using Whitetail Institute products long enough to know the company doesn't introduce something new unless it's been thoroughly researched, tested and proven to ensure it will be a winner. It appears Fusion has met that standard with room to spare, and I expect it to be a cornerstone of my food-plotting strategy for years. 



REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

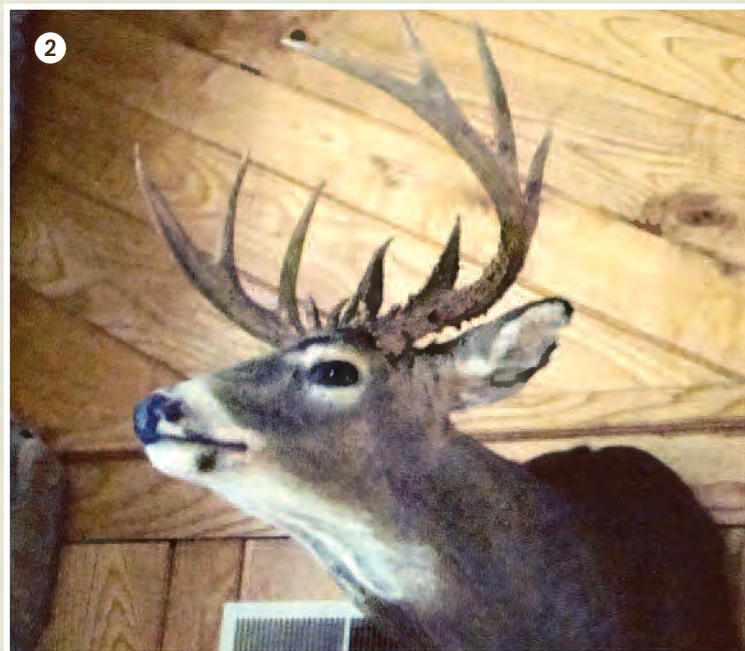
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about Whitetail Institute products...



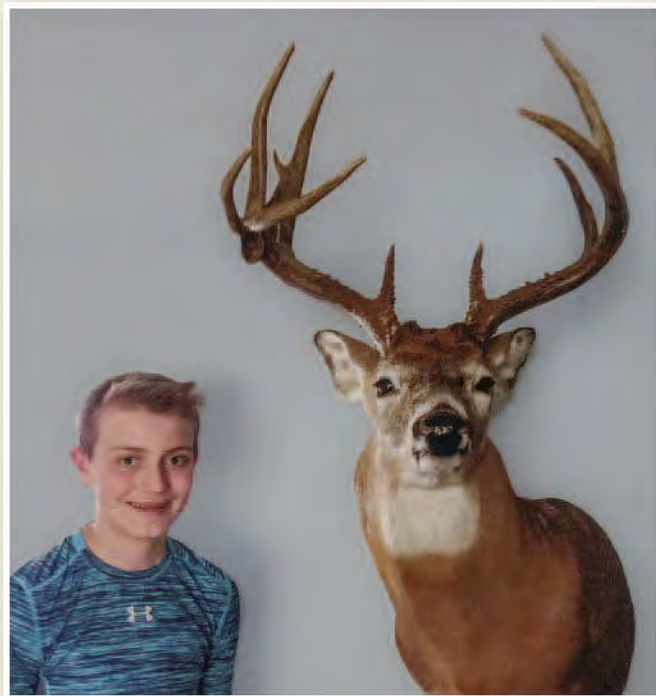
The Imperial Whitetail Clover and Chicory Plus (now Fusion) fields continue to produce record bucks on our Pennsylvania farm. Last year we added a field of Winter Peas Plus. That field had a harvest of three racked bucks and one bear in Virginia. (photo 1 is one of the bucks) The Secret Spot planting produced a 10-point and two 8-pointers last year. In our Tall Tine Tubers field we added some Extreme with great results. Four 8-pointers and one 11-pointer (photo 2). We are continuing to add more acres to our program each year. Since we started using Whitetail Institute products, we've enjoyed watching our deer herd grow. Not only in numbers but in the health of the deer. Thank you, Whitetail Institute.

Robert Wert - Pennsylvania



We have tons of pictures of two nice bucks using the Chicory Plus (now Fusion) plot but we moved back in the woods a little ways from the plot for gun season. Opening morning we hadn't been there but about an hour and Clay, my 13-year-old son said he heard something on his side of the blind, I looked and it was a nice 9-point at about 25 yards. Clay started to get his gun out of the blind, and it saw him and turned and ran away, Clay was so disappointed. He put his gun down and put his face in his hands and shook his head because he knew he messed up. I told him it'll be OK. That's hunting. For the evening hunt, we moved to a pipeline so we could see farther, and after being there about two hours, Clay was getting something to snack on and I saw a big buck step out into the pipeline at about 130 yards. I told Clay to get his gun. I told him to take his time, and he smoked it. We were so pumped. I roughed scored him at 162-1/8. Not too bad for a 13-year-old. Our deer have been getting bigger since we have been planting Whitetail Institute food plots. With the help of Whitetail Institute consultants, I have gotten pretty good at growing the plots.

Chuck Massey - West Virginia



Send Us Your Photos!

Do you have photos and/or a story of a big buck, a small buck or a doe that you took with the help of Imperial products? Send it to us and you might find it in the Field Tester section of the next issue of *Whitetail News*. Email your digital photos and a 3 to 4 paragraph story telling how you harvested the deer and the role our products played to

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or send them to:

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Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 46 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL ALFA-RACK PLUS® YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$289.96 (33 lbs. - 2.5 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$224.96

Please send _____ 33 lb. quantities of Imperial Alfa-Rack PLUS Alfalfa-Clover Blend.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 33 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL FUSION® YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$289.96 (27.75 lbs. - 4.5 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$224.94

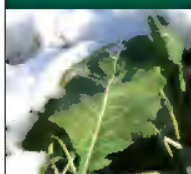
Please send _____ 27.75 lb. quantities of Imperial FUSION.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 27.75 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL WINTER-GREENS® YOU SAVE \$70.00



Suggested Retail: \$239.96 (24 lbs. - 4 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$169.96

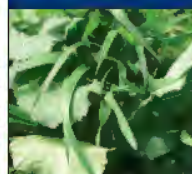
Please send _____ 24 lb. quantities of Imperial Winter-Greens.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$12.00 for shipping and handling for each 24 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL PURE ATTRACTION® YOU SAVE \$35.00



Suggested Retail: \$94.96 (52 lbs. - 1 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$59.96

Please send _____ 52 lb. quantities of Imperial Pure Attraction.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 52 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL TALL TINE TUBERS® YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$199.96 (24 lbs. - 4 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$134.96

Please send _____ 24 lb. quantities of Imperial Tall Tine Tubers.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$12.00 for shipping and handling for each 24 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL EDGE® YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$289.96 (52 lbs. - 2 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$224.96

Please send _____ 52 lb. bags of Imperial Edge.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 52 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL TURKEY SELECT® YOU SAVE \$40.00



Suggested Retail: \$149.99 (40 lbs. - 1 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$109.96

Please send _____ 40 lb. quantities of Imperial Turkey Select.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 40 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL "CHIC" MAGNET® YOU SAVE \$50.00



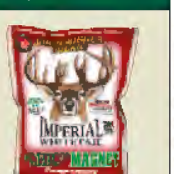
Suggested Retail: \$139.94 (9 lbs. - 3 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$89.94

Please send _____ 9 lb. quantities of Imperial "Chic" Magnet.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$9.50 for shipping and handling for each 9 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



COUPON PRICES NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE

DISCOUNT COUPONS - Order Today!

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL OATS PLUS® YOU SAVE \$13.00



Suggested Retail: \$49.95 (45 lbs. - 1/2 Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$36.95

Please send _____ 45 lb. bags of Whitetail Oats Plus.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 45 lbs. ordered. (Not available in Canada.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL AMBUSH® YOU SAVE \$20.00



Suggested Retail: \$120.00 (40 lbs. - 1-Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$99.96

Please send _____ 40 lb. quantities of Imperial Ambush.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 40 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL WINTER PEAS PLUS® YOU SAVE \$10.00



Suggested Retail: \$120.00 (44 lbs. - 1-Acre Planting)

Price with coupon: \$109.98

Please send _____ 44 lb. quantities of Imperial Winter Peas Plus.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 44 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



ARREST MAX® HERBICIDE YOU SAVE \$10.00 to \$50.00

Suggested Retail: \$49.95 (1 Pint - 1 Acre); \$189.99 (1/2 Gal. - 4 Acres)

Price with coupon: 1 Pint - \$39.95; 1/2 Gal. - \$138.96

Please send _____ pint(s) of ARREST MAX Herbicide.

Please send _____ 1/2 gallon(s) of ARREST MAX Herbicide.

Call for larger quantities.

TOTAL \$ _____

No charge for shipping and handling. Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



Apple OBSESSION "Super" Deer Attractant YOU SAVE \$15.00 - \$40.00



Suggested Retail: \$119.96 — 6-Pak, \$59.97 — 3-Pak

Coupon Price: \$79.92 or \$44.97

Please send _____ Apple OBSESSION 6-Paks @ \$79.92

Please send _____ Apple OBSESSION 3-Paks @ \$44.97

TOTAL \$ _____

No charge for shipping and handling. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



SLAY® HERBICIDE YOU SAVE \$10.00 to \$21.00

Suggested Retail: \$59.95 (4 oz. - 1 Acre); \$159.95 (1 Pint - 4 Acres)

Price with coupon: 4 oz. - \$49.98; 1 Pint - \$138.98

Please send _____ 4 oz. Package(s) of SLAY Herbicide.

Please send _____ Pint(s) of SLAY Herbicide.

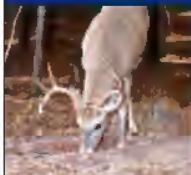
Call for larger quantities.

TOTAL \$ _____

No charge for shipping and handling. Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL 30-06® BLOCK YOU SAVE Up To \$13.00



Suggested Retail: \$59.96 and \$29.95

Coupon Price: \$46.96 or \$24.95

Please send _____ ☐ 2-Pak Blocks @ \$46.96

Please send _____ ☐ 1 Block @ \$24.95

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$12.00 for shipping and handling for EACH Block or \$18.00 for EACH Double Pack. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL 4-PLAY BLOCK® YOU SAVE Up To \$25.00



Suggested Retail: \$59.96 and \$29.95

Coupon Price: \$34.96 or \$19.95

Please send _____ ☐ 2-Pak Blocks @ \$34.96

Please send _____ ☐ 1 Block @ \$19.95

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$12.00 for shipping and handling for EACH Block or \$18.00 for EACH Double Pack. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



IMPERIAL 30-06® Mineral/Vitamin Supplements YOU SAVE \$25.00



Suggested Retail: \$90.97 and \$99.97 (60 lbs.)

Coupon Price: \$65.97 or \$74.97

Please send _____ 60 lb. quantities of 30-06™

☐ Original 30-06™ @ \$65.97

☐ 30-06™ Plus Protein @ \$74.97

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

Please add \$19.00 for shipping and handling for each 60 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



* Important: Shipping & Payment Information

* Please Include Daytime Phone Number For UPS Shipments and Any Questions We May Have About Your Order.

Name: _____

Shipping Address: (No P.O. Box) _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Email: _____

Payment Method:

☐ Check or Money Order Enclosed

Charge to my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover

Credit Card#: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Sec. Code _____

Signature: _____



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COUPON PRICES NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE



Bob Goodspeed – Maine

In Maine, the winters can be brutal. On my land, the deer could not be found after the end of December. Since I started planting Whitetail Oats Plus and Winter-Greens the deer are staying all winter. They will dig through 2 feet of snow to feed on the Oats and Winter-Greens. My 13-year-old grandson shot his first buck over our food plot. I was as excited as he was. At his urging, I just placed an order for next fall's seed!

Dave Wilhemi – Iowa

On 10-year-old, Hannah Kramer's second evening hunt during last year's youth season, she passed up on some does and a small buck. About a half hour before dark, this buck came in. As you can see by her smile, she's excited and can't wait till next season. The Winter-Greens draws a lot of deer in. We recommend it as part of any hunter's food plot plan. It's especially effective the colder it gets. Winter-Greens is the No. 1 seed we use. Thank you.



Jason Say – Pennsylvania

This is a photo of my wife Liza's first deer. I have been hunting my entire life, so when my wife came to me and said she thought she would like to go hunting, I was ecstatic. Initially, I tried to talk her into shooting her first deer with a gun or crossbow, but she had her mind made up that she wanted to do it with a bow. She is just a little thing, so she had to work hard to be able to pull enough weight, but she worked at it all summer and is shooting great. I knew there was no place better to take her, than one of our Whitetail Institute food plots. The plot we chose was planted with Fusion in the upper half and Beets and Greens in the lower half, and the deer were absolutely hammering it all. It wasn't long until we had three does come into the plot and calmly feed down towards us. Liza waited and came to full draw on a big old doe at 19 yards and made a perfect shot! I am one super-proud husband. There is nothing better than time in the outdoors with your family! Thanks for helping make hunts like these possible Whitetail Institute. 🙏

First Deer is presented and sponsored by TRACT OPTICS. Visit them online at www.tractoptics.com. Email your First Deer photos and story to info@whitetailinstitute.com or send them to Whitetail Institute of North America, 239 Whitetail Trail, Pintlala 36043, Attn.: First Deer Dept.

WHITETAIL INSTITUTE APPAREL

CAPS

All our Whitetail Institute caps are made from top quality cotton, and feature detailed embroidered logos and graphics.

Caps: \$9.95

(All apparel orders (unlimited quantity) please add \$5.50 for shipping and handling)



Hunter Orange Logo Cap



Camo w/Tan Mesh Logo Cap



Brown w/Tan Mesh Logo Cap



Camo Logo Cap



Black Logo Cap

SHORT SLEEVE TEES

All our Whitetail Institute tees are made from 100% preshrunk cotton, and feature screen-printed front and back designs.

Short Sleeve Tees: S-2X: \$13.95, 3X: \$16.55 (All apparel orders (unlimited quantity) please add \$5.50 for shipping and handling.)



Front Chest Design



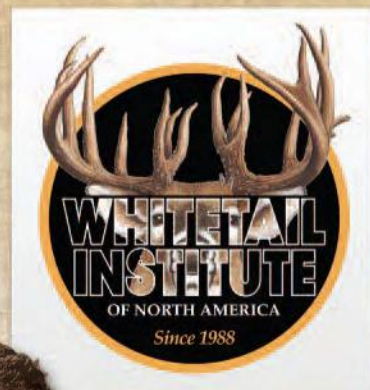
Front Chest Design



Upper Back Design



Upper Back Design



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Front Chest Design

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S to XXXL

Available colors:

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Available color:

White

Telling Today's Story for Tomorrow

By **Kristopher M. Klemick**

Photo by the Author

I grew up fascinated by trains. Through my adolescent years, the appreciation grew, and after high school, I accomplished one of my life's goals — I was working for the railroad.

The company, Conrail, was the result of the federal government's takeover of all six major railroads in the Northeast as they collapsed and filed bankruptcy. Congress bailed them out, took control of the assets and created the Consolidated Rail Corp. in 1976. It was a new company, rich in history but losing \$1 million per day until the 1980s, when it finally turned a profit and repaid the federal government every taxpayer penny used in the bailout. In the late 1990s, however, Conrail was purchased by two Southern railroads, and I decided a Conrail Historical Society Inc. should exist to preserve the company's legacy.

So much of what we do in life is taken for granted — where we hunt, the people we hunt with, the fall forest and its splendor, the giant oak that has stood tall for an eternity. Simply, it's all the experiences we enjoy. We unknowingly speed through life waiting for the next opening day when suddenly, we begin to notice the color in our beard, the gray in our hair or even less hair that can turn gray.

Words and pictures educate us. They teach us about history and remind us of things near and dear to our hearts. I learned a long time ago — and fortunately at a young age — that you can never have too many pictures or write too few words. I carry a camera every time I go in the woods. My brother jokes that I tote more audio-visual gear than actual hunting equipment, but he's right. Cameras, tripods, video cameras, spare batteries, extra lenses, external microphone — they let me capture more than just the experience. What I've preserved from past decades is irreplaceable and priceless.

I also keep a hunting journal. In it, I write not just the weather and what I saw each day, but all of the details surrounding my life and the world around me at that time. I do it because years later, when I open those books, I don't just want simple words to read. I wish for a story to be told — life illustrated as if it were that day.

I challenge you to take pictures, keep a journal and write down your

thoughts. Capture something. Anything. As detailed or scatter-brained as it might be, do something you can pass along — or leave behind — for someone who might enjoy the serenity and ever-beautiful landscape you currently enjoy or is entrusted to you.

Far too often, I've stood in a shopping center parking lot realizing the property was once a sprawling rail yard decades earlier, where mile-long trains were built and broken down, large shop complexes maintained thousands of freight cars or locomotives, and buildings were constantly abuzz with men laughing, carrying on and sharing stories of life on the railroad. Faded memories and images I never experienced in person, gone; victim to time and our constant fascination with progress. "What's next?" we ask, when you should truly ask yourself, "What once was?"

Fortunately, a wise few saw to it that their life at the time was captured on paper and film. Through their efforts, not all was lost, and as time marches on, so too does a bit of history.

I keep a journal because every day I take to the woods, I experience a lifetime of lessons and memories worthy of putting pen to paper. I'm no Ernest Hemingway, that is sure. I'm simply a passionate individual who loves all that is the great outdoors: the rustle of leaves as a turkey scratches for food; the smell of fall, fresh dirt and late-season food plots; the whitetail grooming her young and teaching them the ways of survival.

I write because I want something to have at deer camp when I'm too frail to climb into my stand; something to take me back to a time far too clear in my mind to be so long ago. Most important, though, I write so my children, their children and their children's children have something tangible to take with them to the woods, recalling a time when those leaves still smelled the same. The only difference is about 150 years. 🍂

Imperial Whitetail Clover

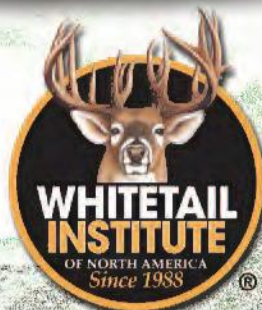
FIRST in the FIELD

SINCE 1988



When Imperial Whitetail Clover was introduced in 1988, it marked the first in the field of food plot management and deer nutrition. This new product gave hunters the ability to attract deer, hold them on their property and supply the herd with optimal nutrition throughout the year. In fact, deer hunters today are five times more likely to kill a buck that qualifies for the record books than before the introduction of Imperial Whitetail Clover.

The Whitetail Institute's research and development staff have continuously upgraded and improved the original blend. Proprietary clovers developed by Whitetail Institute agronomists have been incorporated resulting in even better attraction and extremely high protein levels, up to 35%. These clovers are available only in Whitetail Institute products. Imperial Whitetail Clover was the first in the field and has become the gold standard by which all other food plot products are judged.



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