

WHITETAIL News



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***Magic Between
The Rows:***

Inter-Seeding Food Plots

Story On Page 14

Last Minute Food Plots

Story On Page 56

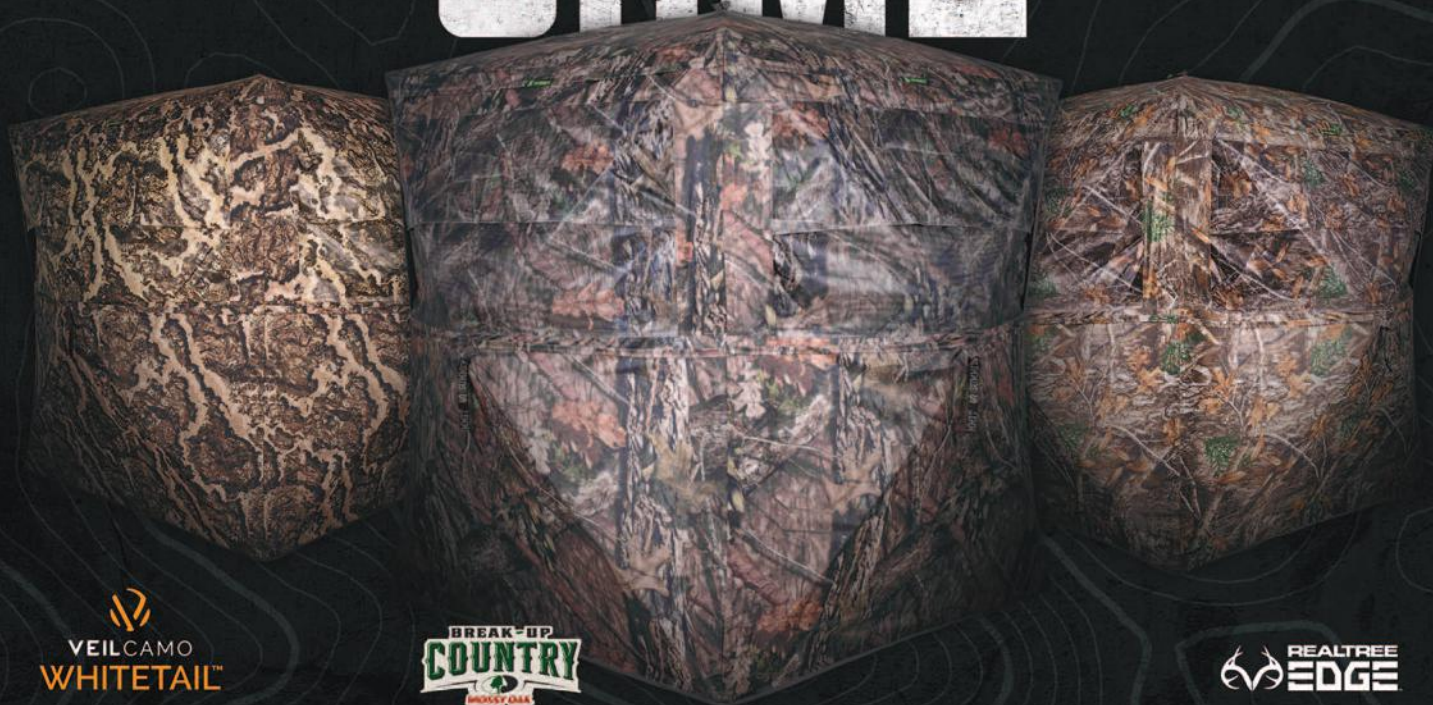
The Best Worst Season Ever ***Experiences with Family Create a Memorable Season***

Story On Page 5

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A Message from **RAY SCOTT**

Founder of the Whitetail Institute of North America

As we all know,
hunting and
fishing are
about much
more than just
killing or
catching.
A whole lot
more.

Because Hunting Is About Much More Than Just Killing

What a great issue of *Whitetail News* you're holding in your hands. Two articles in it really struck a nerve with me: One, a great article by Zeke Pipher (page 62) about representing our sport and one, a classic R.G. Bernier piece (page 65) about the total hunting experience — well beyond the pull of a trigger or the release of an arrow.

Actually I had to chuckle about Zeke's experience as the lone outdoor writer at a writers conference consisting entirely of non-hunting women. As you can imagine, in spite of his knowledge and diplomacy, the initial sentiments in the room were decidedly negative when it came to killing beautiful deer.

I am proud of Zeke's thoughtful and respectful response defending our sport that ultimately earned praise and hopefully some genuine understanding from the ladies.

Zeke's article also brings to mind some of my experiences years ago as founder and CEO of B.A.S.S. (Bass Anglers Sportsman Society of America) when we were confronting anti-fishing sentiments expressed in the slogan that "fish have feelings too."

As we all know, hunting and fishing are about much more than just killing or catching. A whole lot more. Both Zeke's and R.G.'s article do an awesome job of illustrating this.

I remember an article that appeared a number of years ago in *Whitetail News* about a father who checked his son out of school to hunt one particular day.

Although he provided an honest and upfront excuse to the teacher, he was nonetheless called in for further explanation for why his son had missed that day of school.

The father explained to her in a very respectful way that in the course of that day he introduced his son to the outdoor world in a way no book or classroom ever could. In essence his son had a course in zoology, botany, geography, agriculture, ecosystems and more. That's all in addition to proper firearm use and safety... not to mention sportsmanship and respect for the outdoor resources. And last but not least, there were the invaluable benefits of father/son bonding.

As I recall the teacher could not, and did not, argue about a day full of genuine learning, never to be forgotten in that young lad's life.

Ray Scott

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The **BEST** Worst Season Ever

By Matt Harper

Photos by the Author



All of us – This certainly wasn't a picture of the biggest deer I have ever taken but remains one of my favorite deer pictures.

If anyone tells you getting older is great or a totally enjoyable experience, don't fall for it. Because aging is inevitable, getting older beats the alternative. But now that I'm 47, I realize the physical aspects of getting progressively longer in the tooth are not necessarily something to look forward to.

Age has a few advantages, one of which is that the accumulation of experiences molds your perspective and changes your ways of thinking. I was blessed to have a dad who taught me to hunt at a young age. We hunted small game mostly because that's what he grew up hunting. When I grew older, I took up deer hunting with friends, and 30 minutes into my first hunt, I stood mesmerized over the fat doe I had just shot. I knew I was hooked. Back then, we party hunted, which meant we conducted deer drives and shot deer until all the tags were full.

For a teen-age boy, it didn't get much more exciting. There was shooting everywhere and deer running this way and that. People yelled, "They're headed north of the fence row," and if you were in that spot, anticipation-driven adrenaline pulsed through you. When I went off to college, I returned during deer season and hunted with the same guys. But for some reason, the excitement began to wane. For about four years, deer season came and went, and my shotgun never left the gun cabinet. I still loved hunting, but the passion had gone away.

Then I was blessed to start working as the national sales manager at the Whitetail Institute and made my living talking to people about how they could manage and hunt deer more effectively. One of my first sales calls was in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, at the archery distributor, Lancaster Archery Supply. I met the owner, Rob Kaufhold, and he politely let the green sales guy bumble and stutter his way through the pitch. He then asked if I bowhunted. When I walked out the door, I had not sold Rob anything, but I carried a brand-new bow and a quiver of arrows. I had been schooled in the art of selling and thought that if I continued, I would be broke within a month. Seriously, Rob was not trying to make a sale. He simply wanted to introduce me to the world of bowhunting and the passion the sport invoked. For that, I'll be forever grateful.

I somehow clipped the jugular on a yearling forkhorn during my first archery hunt, and my passion for deer hunting was reborn. During the next several years, I got a little better at bowhunting and shot some really good bucks. I also took up muzzleloader hunting during the late season and added a few more bucks to the wall. In the past 20 years, I have taken several Pope and Young bucks, with a few Booners thrown in. Many factors contributed to my success, including learning the benefits of food plots and deer minerals, managing for big deer, and spending time with some exceptional hunters who shared a treasure chest of knowledge. Also, I lived and hunted in southern Iowa on Dad's or my properties, which allowed for more opportunity at big, mature bucks.

But even considering those factors, there's still a massive piece of

the puzzle with which all hunters must contend: luck. No matter how good of a plan you put together or how sharply you hone your hunting skills, luck still plays a major role in triumph or defeat. I have heard people say that you make your own luck, and no doubt being a better deer hunter increases your odds of tagging good bucks. However, if bad luck is served that day, no amount of hunting prowess will overcome it.

I have experienced periods when luck landed on both sides of the fence. I have taken several trophy bucks when there was no reason I should have. One season, I shot a 178 (gross) 8-pointer in November on a 63-degree day, when no mature buck should have been moving. The same year, I shot a 183 nontypical, even though my muzzleloader misfired on the first shot. Conversely, I've had streaks of bad luck when it seemed I was doing everything right but my tag stayed in my pocket. But even with bad luck, dogged determination usually wins. If I keep at it long after others have filled their tags, it should all eventually come together. Except for two years ago.

That year was an epic adventure of bad hunting luck. Starting in spring, I chased a couple of call-shy toms for about two weeks. The turkeys won, and the season closed with me not filling a tag for first time in about 12 years. During my Utah mule deer hunt, I had my cross-hairs on a 180-inch velvet 4-by-4 at 400 yards, and after the shot, the deer appeared to do a death run over the hill. Upon examination, we found no deer but some blood, which we followed for eight hours only to have the buck break from cover and speed away like he didn't have a scratch. Two weeks later, another hunter shot him and confirmed that my bullet had creased the buck's brisket.

Even though the year was not shaping up to be one of my best, I still had whitetail deer season on my home turf, and I was flush with the confidence built from years of success. Early season came and went with no big buck sightings. I saw some shooters on camera, but nothing crossed my path while hunting. No matter. I normally had the best success during the rut, so I remained positive. The rut was early that year, so I hunted hard from late October through early November — and ended up seeing squat.

However, I sliced my leg pretty good when I slipped on an icy branch. I also dropped my bow 18 feet out of a tree and almost froze during several hunts. I wasn't even seeing shooter deer on my trail cameras, although there was no reason for their disappearance. Even though I tried to bolster my confidence and stay positive through the late rut, continued nonproductive sits without seeing big bucks began to crush my resolve. In late November, a scraggly looking 4-year-old got to within 50 yards, and I took a half-hearted shot, only to watch the arrow fly harmlessly over his back. Somehow, I knew I was going to miss. That night, I gave up. Shotgun season started in a few days, so I said to heck with it and figured I would just sit around and sulk, waiting for the late muzzleloader season.

Amazingly, my 81-year-old dad had never shot a whitetail buck. As mentioned, he grew up hunting small game and upland birds, so he really never got the deer hunting bug. He went with me a few times, but he had never connected. He mentioned that he really wanted to shoot a buck that year, so I decided that when late muzzleloader season started, my goal was to get Dad his buck. I bought a couple of shooting houses with the safe stairs and rails to make it easier for Dad, and when the first day of season arrived, we settled down in the new blind.

A week passed with nothing to show for our efforts, and I began to think that my bad luck was contagious. But then one day, when trying

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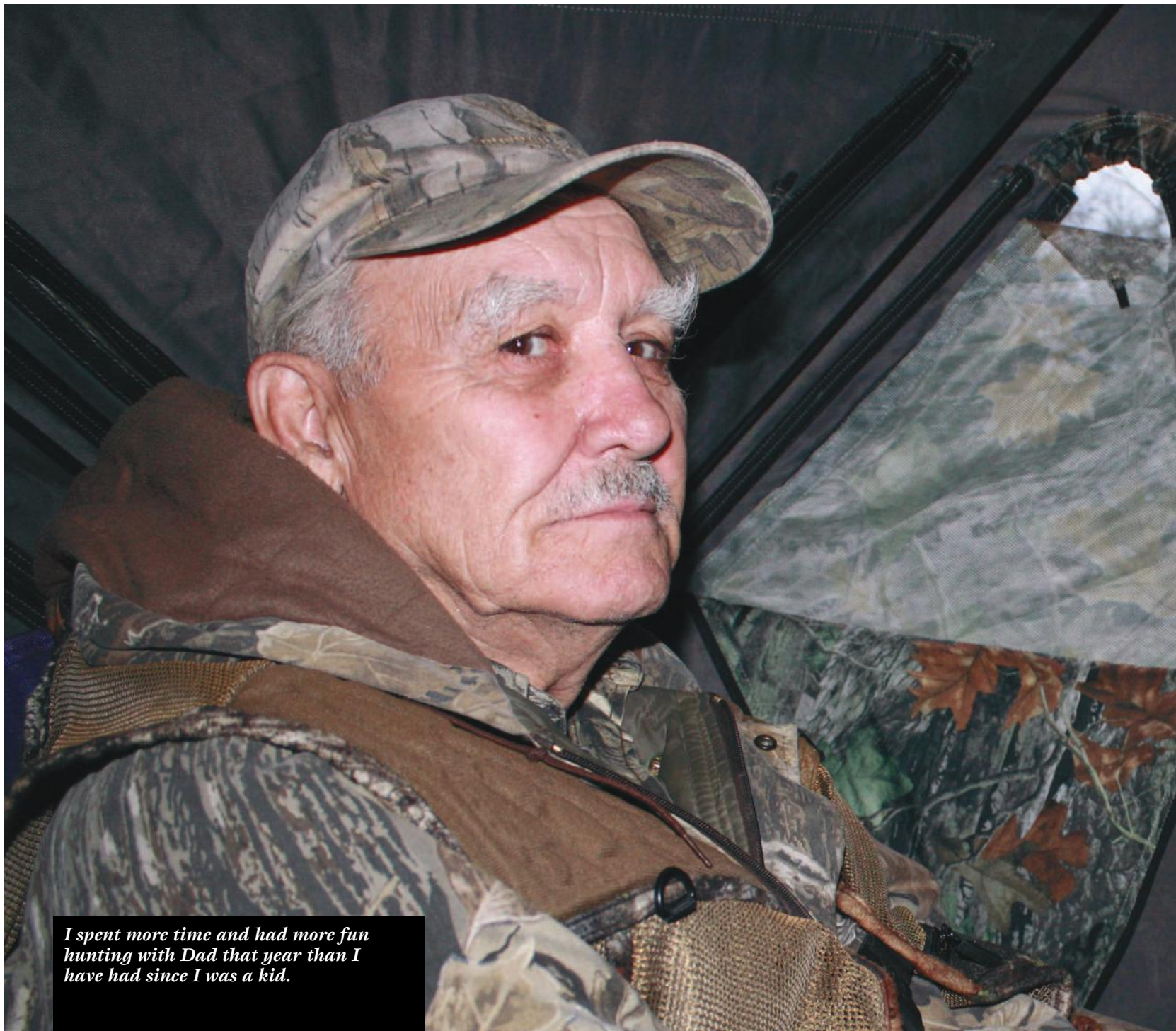
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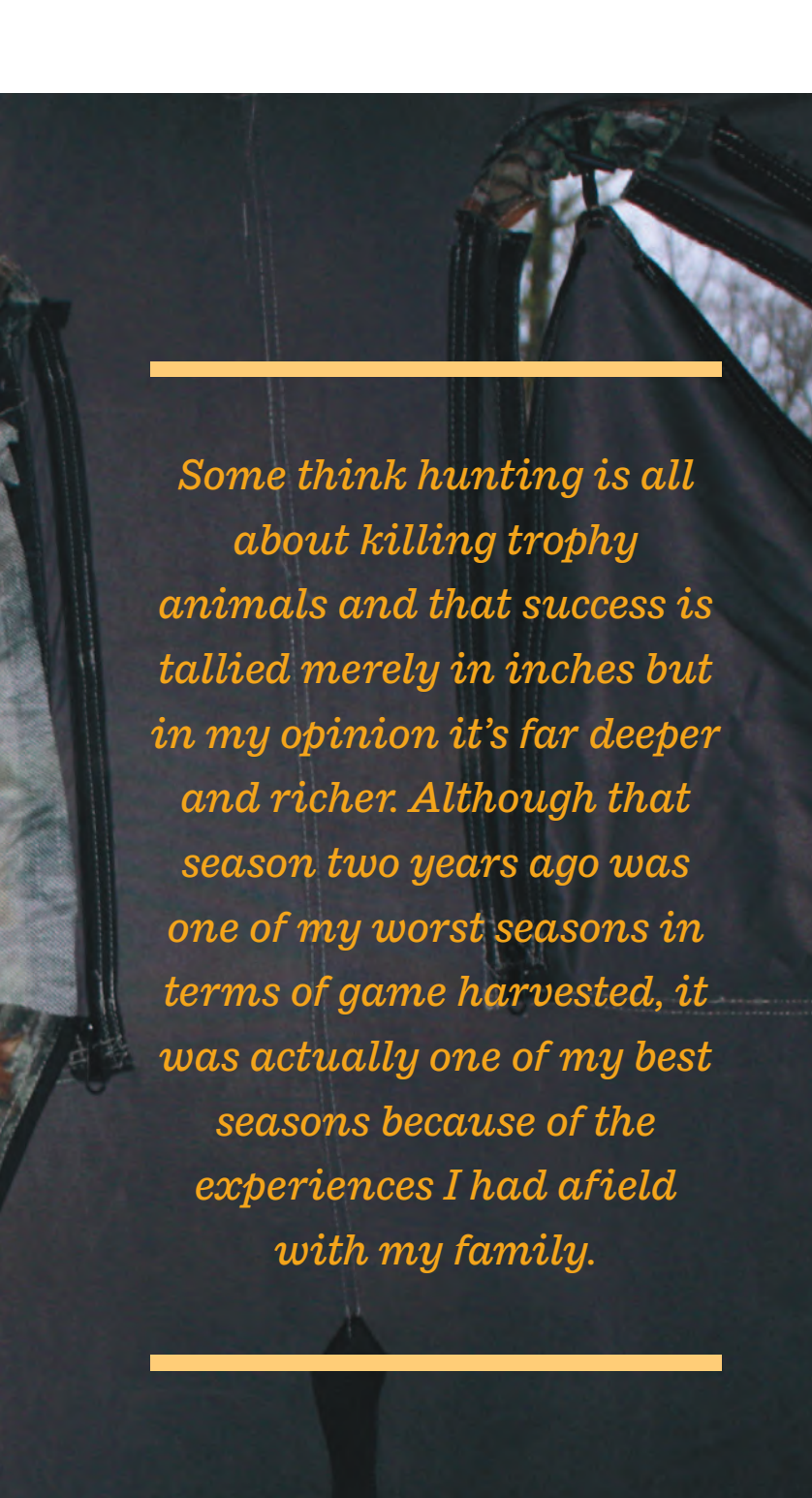
I spent more time and had more fun hunting with Dad that year than I have had since I was a kid.

to stifle my laughter about something goofy Dad had said, a thought occurred. I had spent more time hunting with Dad that season than I had since I was a child. Even though we weren't seeing much, I looked forward to going each evening because Dad and I were having fun simply hunting together. Early one afternoon, several days into season, a good 8-pointer walked into the field, and Dad said he wanted him. Dad made a perfect shot, and our quest for his first deer ended in success.

There were still three or four days left of the late muzzleloader season, so I figured I would try. Dad said he wanted to go with me, so it made for a good excuse to spend some more time together. We hunted

a couple of evenings with the same results I had experienced all season, but I didn't care that much. I was going hunting now more to hang out with Dad. In fact, I wasn't even trying to stifle my laughter anymore. Dad and I just joked around and drank coffee, occasionally halfheartedly looking around for deer.

On the last day of season, we were sitting in the blind, and I was listening to Dad loudly tell a story I had heard at least 100 times when I noticed a couple of does coming up the draw toward us. Right behind her was the scraggly 4-year-old I had missed during bow season. He came to within about 80 yards, and I poked the gun barrel out, thinking I might as well take him, as it was the final day,



Some think hunting is all about killing trophy animals and that success is tallied merely in inches but in my opinion it's far deeper and richer. Although that season two years ago was one of my worst seasons in terms of game harvested, it was actually one of my best seasons because of the experiences I had afield with my family.

and he was a cull buck.

I pulled the trigger and the buck bolted, but then stopped, looked around and walked into the trees. I had missed. What should have been a slam dunk was a pure miss. I was disgusted with myself and angrily reloaded, even though I figured that shot had ended the season. Five minutes later, Dad said, "There's deer coming out of the timber to the south." Sure enough, does were trickling out of a stand of young oaks, and behind them was a good 8-pointer. Dad and I had to shift in the blind, and I was shaky on the sticks with the emotions of the previous few minutes. But I tried to calm myself and squeezed off a shot.

The buck dropped immediately, but while I was reloading, Dad said, "Hurry, he's getting up." I made a second shot as he stood in the middle of the oak trees and then watched him move down into a creek bed and out of sight. I didn't know what to think, but my built-up negativity from the season screamed that I wouldn't find him. Dad and I walked to where we last saw the buck and found a blood trail, but it wasn't good.

The trail played out after 50 yards, so we started walking toward where we thought the buck might have gone. I looked down at a suspicious red leaf when I heard deer running up the next ridge to the east. The buck I'd shot was in the group, and five seconds later, he was gone. Dad and I got back to the truck, and I thought that was an exclamation point to the season. All the thoughts I had about the blessing of hunting so much with Dad remained, but they were overpowered by self-deprecation. I endured my 30-minute drive home, filled with tormented replays of my failures that year.

When I got home, my oldest daughter, Emma, who was back from college, met me in the kitchen. I relayed to her my tale of woe, and she brightly said, "I'll go with you in the morning, and we will find him." I appreciated her optimism, and she is a really good blood trailer. However I was sure it would be a wild goose chase. Regardless, she talked me into it the next morning, and we picked up Dad and headed to where I'd found the last blood.

Emma is good with blood trails, and her young eyes picked up traces of blood I'd overlooked, following the trail another 100 yards. But eventually, even she lost the trail. I was almost ready to quit when she suggested that we search a couple of ravines on our way back to the truck to meet Dad. So I trudged up the ridge to look in the upper part of the ravine while she covered the lower end. A few minutes later, I heard her yell at me from the bottom of the ravine: "Hey Dad, was the deer you shot an 8-pointer?"

"Yes," I replied, with guarded optimism.

"Well, there's one lying dead right here," she replied.

Sure enough, she had found him. I slid down the incline and hugged my daughter, who was beaming at me. Dad had heard the commotion and soon joined us to round out the three-generation search party. I will never forget that moment as I looked at the buck with Dad, who was with me when I'd shot it, and my daughter, whose persistence and positive attitude drove her to find it. It was a good deer, although not exceptional and not my biggest. But that memory will stick with me long after memories of other hunts and bigger deer have faded. That's not because of the deer but because of the people who shared in my hunt.

Some think hunting is all about killing trophy animals and that success is tallied merely in inches but in my opinion it's far deeper and richer. Although that season two years ago was one of my worst seasons in terms of game harvested, it was actually one of my best seasons because of the experiences I had afield with my family.

Does that mean I don't chase trophy whitetails anymore or get excited when I harvest a giant? Of course not. I still chase them and get excited when I succeed. But through time, I've been shown that hunting is an experience filled with many aspects aside from the kill. If Dad or I would have shot a deer the first day, we would not have had all that time together. If we would have found my buck the night I shot it, I would have missed the incredible experience with my daughter. Ultimately, there is luck in hunting, but I also know God has a plan. Like other things in life, we might not understand the plan, but that doesn't mean there isn't one. 🦌

Whitetail Oats PLUS

Make Sure It's a Fundamental Part of Your Food Plot System

By **Whitetail Institute Staff**

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

Whitetail Oats PLUS is one of the most exceptionally attractive and versatile food plot products on the market. As such, you should make it a fundamental part of your food plot plantings. In fact, it can be a great idea to order a little extra when you're buying your fall food plot seed. The benefits can really stack up.

Exceptional Attractiveness. It's no secret that attractiveness to whitetail deer is the number one requirement the Whitetail Institute demands of all its food plot products. Whitetail Oats PLUS is certainly no exception. The main component in Whitetail Oats PLUS is the most attractive oat variety the Whitetail Institute has ever tested.

The Whitetail Institute first heard about this oat variety through one of its worldwide agriculture contacts, a university research team. The researchers told the Institute about the oat variety that had been included in a university research project comparing how well different oat varieties performed as grain producers. According to the Whitetail Institute's source, the university researchers had removed the oat variety from the grain production tests and "shelved it" because it had been so heavily browsed by deer that it was not a good grain producer.

The Whitetail Institute was, for obvious reasons, very interested in exploring the variety's potential as a forage for use in food plots for deer. Initial tests included evaluating the variety's attractiveness to deer, how well it grew in different climates, and other performance characteristics related to use in food plots for deer. Those tests confirmed that the oat variety is high in sugar and extremely attractive to whitetails, well suited to a broad range of climates, and extremely winter-hardy.

Because of the oat's outstanding performance during Whitetail Institute testing, the Whitetail Institute purchased the rights to the variety and named it "Whitetail Oats." Whitetail Oats is the most attractive oat variety to deer the Institute has ever tested, and it is only available in Whitetail Institute products.



Unmatched Versatility. Whitetail Oats PLUS is truly a top performer when planted by itself. It's among the fastest food plot plantings to green up after planting, and it begins attracting deer right away. It can also be planted with other fall-planted food plot crops to add variety, early and late-season attraction and tonnage, and to act as a nurse crop.

Whitetail Oats PLUS as a "Nurse Crop." A nurse crop is basically a fast-growing secondary crop that's planted with a primary crop such as Imperial Whitetail Clover, Alfa-Rack PLUS, Vision, Extreme or Fusion in the same seedbed. Several characteristics of Whitetail Oats PLUS make it an ideal choice for this application. Below, I'll tell you how to plant Whitetail Oats PLUS as a nurse crop, but first, let's look at why it's such a great complement to fall-planted perennials.

First, all Whitetail Institute food plot seed components are evaluated for rapid emergence and seedling vigor. That's why all Whitetail In-

stitute food plot products can appear above ground so soon after planting. Whitetail Oats PLUS can do so even more quickly and, when planted as a nurse crop, will help the food plot green up more quickly and start attracting deer as soon after planting as possible.

A nurse crop of Whitetail Oats PLUS is also a great way to ensure that you'll have superb fall-planted food plots even if Mother Nature gets stingy with rain in late summer or early fall, limiting the growth of the perennial. Whitetail Oats PLUS can also germinate and grow with less moisture in the soil than is required for most other forages and can provide a highly attractive food plot for deer while the perennial seeds establish.

In addition, the plants in Whitetail Oats PLUS also have fibrous roots, which help hold the soil in place while the perennials establish. Whitetail Oats PLUS also creates a microenvironment of higher humidity near the soil surface that helps reduce evaporation of moisture

from the soil. This microenvironment, coupled with the water-holding benefits of the Whitetail Institute's RAINBOND seed coating can provide even greater protection for the perennial seedlings as they sprout and grow.

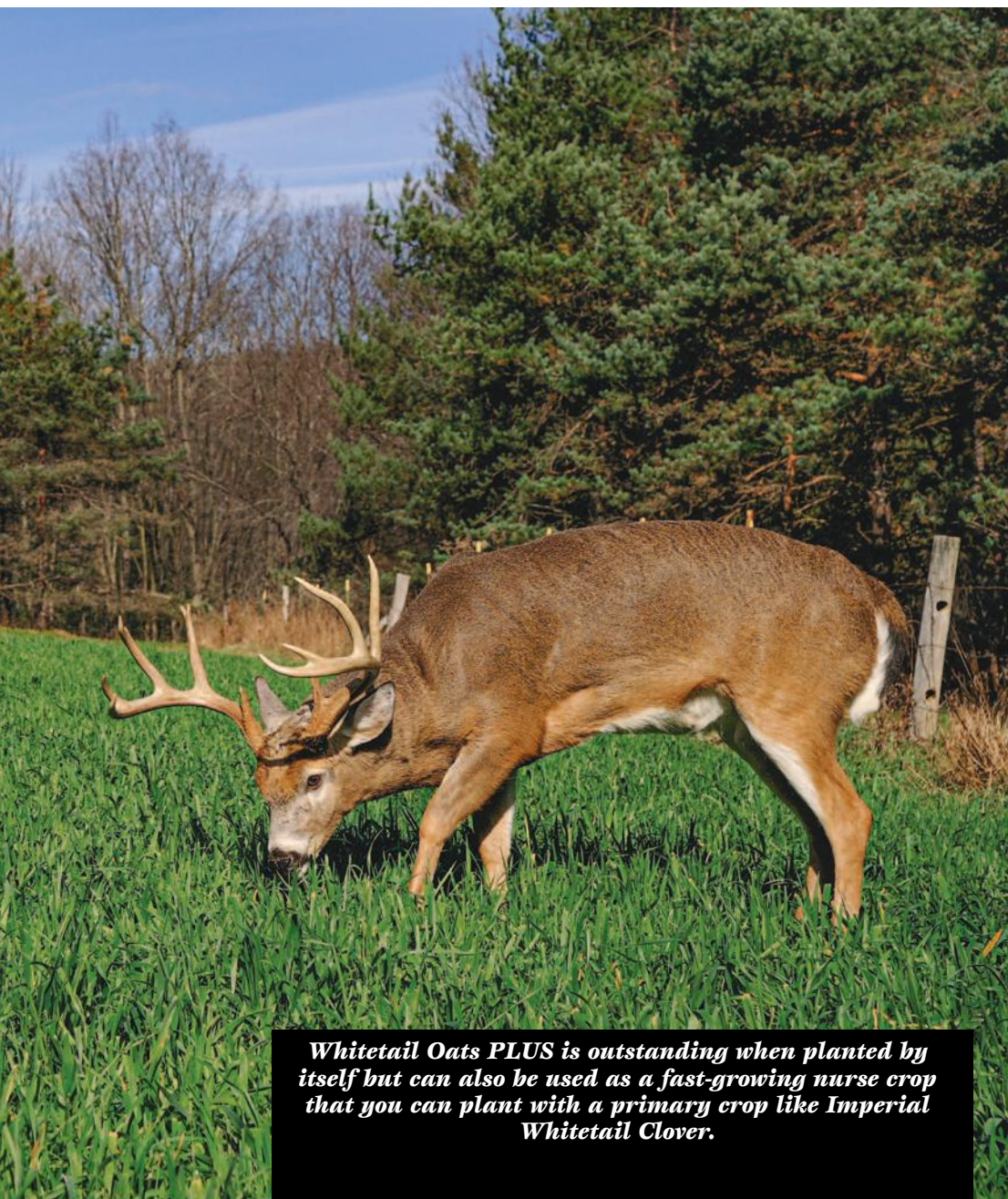
Sustained Attraction. Whitetail Oats PLUS doesn't just provide benefits during the first month or two after planting them with a perennial in the fall. They continue to boost attraction by adding variety to the stand, and they can keep providing benefits to turkeys and other wildlife well into the following spring.

How to Prepare the Seedbed and Plant a Fall Perennial with a Nurse Crop of Whitetail Oats PLUS

Preparing the seedbed and planting a perennial with a nurse crop of Whitetail Oats PLUS is very easy. With a couple of simple exceptions, just follow the planting dates for the perennial you'll be planting. You'll just need to adjust the seeding preparation and planting instructions a little.

Seedbed Preparation

As with any forage planting, it's best to have your soil tested by a qualified soil-testing laboratory such as Whitetail Institute to determine exact lime and fertilizer requirements. If possible, have your soil tested several months in advance of planting so that you can add any lime recommended and disk or till it into the seedbed well in advance of planting. *When you submit your soil sample to the lab, have the lab test for establishment of the perennial you'll be planting, not for the nurse crop.* If no soil test is performed, follow the general recommendations for lime on the back of the bag of the perennial seed.



Whitetail Oats PLUS is outstanding when planted by itself but can also be used as a fast-growing nurse crop that you can plant with a primary crop like Imperial Whitetail Clover.



ass and weeds from the seedbed as possible by disking, tilling or

Planting

your planting window, start by disking or tilling the soil. Then, disk or tilled seedbed, put out the fertilizer (as called for in your soil test) of 17-17-17 or equivalent fertilizer per acre if you didn't do a soil test. Then, put out Whitetail Oats PLUS seed **at a rate of 30-45 pounds per acre.** (Note: Using Whitetail Oats PLUS by itself is 90 pounds per acre. The reduced rate is for using Whitetail Oats PLUS as a nurse crop.)

After you put out the fertilizer and Whitetail Oats PLUS seed, drag the seedbed with the Whitetail Oats PLUS seed. This will also smooth the surface of the seedbed to prepare it for planting the perennial seed. (A cultipacker is not necessary, if you have one, it's okay to cultipack instead of dragging to complete this step.)

After the seedbed has been smoothed, broadcast the perennial seed at its full rate from the front of the bag).

After you have broadcast the perennial seed, if you used a drag at the end of Step 2, then do a final drag to cover the perennial seed. If you used a drag at the end of Step 2, then do not put out the perennial seed. However, if you used a cultipacker to drag the seedbed, then cultipack the seedbed again after putting out the perennial seed to establish good seed-to-soil contact. With Mother Nature's cooperation, the nurse crop of Whitetail Oats PLUS will emerge quickly, and you'll see the perennials emerging soon after. The deer will start showing up soon after the perennials germinate.

For more information, visit whitetailinstitute.com, or call the Whitetail Institute at (800) 888-8888. Knowledgeable in-house consultants. The consultants are available Monday through Friday. The call and the service are free. 🦌

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Magic Between the Rows:

Inter-Seeding Food Plots

By **Scott Bestul**

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

It was going to be a familiar late-season drill — until it wasn't. I'd stuck my buddy Dave in a December tree stand overlooking a food plot that grew soybeans like it wanted to be a production ag field. Temps hovered near zero, and a brisk breeze blew from the northwest, so I figured my friend would be covered up in hungry deer and, with a little luck, have only one decision to make: which deer to shoot.



Dave had a night to remember on more levels than one. More than a dozen does and four bucks fed within bow range that frigid afternoon, but as so often happens with so many deer so close, getting the right one to stand still while the others remained oblivious proved impossible.

"I finally had a nice 10 exactly where I wanted him, but as I started to draw, one of those big, old nanny does decided something wasn't quite right," he said, shaking his head as he climbed in my truck cab. "She trotted off the plot with her tail up and dragged everybody right with her. I was two seconds away from killing a dandy, and a doe screwed it up. Imagine that."

We chuckled together, having both been ruined by mature does more than once.

"So, they were lovin' those beans, huh?" I asked.

"Actually, no," my friend said. "What's all that green stuff between

the rows? They were ignoring the beans and pawing through the snow to get to whatever that was. I couldn't believe it."

The Inter-Seeding Option

And then I remembered. Months before, on a hot August afternoon, I'd hauled a bag of Whitetail Oats Plus to that plot. Then, with the summer sun pounding my shoulders and neck, I'd used a broadcast spreader to fill in several bare spots the bean planter had missed. There was plenty of seed left when I finished patching, so I just walked between the bean rows, spraying seed as I went. The bean leaves were so big and bushy at that point I wondered if any oats were hitting dirt, but enough did that within a few weeks we had a double-bang plot. In addition to the heavy bean pods hanging down, there was a carpet of green in the rows.



I've used that technique in the years since, especially when I have holes in bean plots but also when I think a plot might benefit from an additional food source. Naturally, the question I had before starting this was a concern for adequate soil-seed contact that would ensure germination. After talking to another food plotting buddy, I learned an important trick — actually, a pair of them. First, watch the weather, and plan on planting just before a significant rain. Second, pay attention to the bean leaves. When the leaves turn yellow-brown, they're ready to drop on your seeds and form a germinating hotspot.

Of course, the green stuff — brassicas, oats or other seed — might not look like the magazine-quality plot you'd get if your plot was solely devoted to that purpose. But that's not your goal. Instead, you're creating a plot that does double-duty, offering whitetails the original row-crop with the option of feeding on green, leafy stuff in between. It works surprisingly and consistently well. Whitetail Oats Plus, Winter-Greens, Beets & Greens and Pure Attraction are all Whitetail Institute products that are ideal for inter-seeding.

The Next Level

Luke Bergler has taken this concept to another level. Bergler lives on and makes his living from a 200-acre farm near my home in south-eastern Minnesota. In addition to running a cow-calf beef operation, Bergler raises corn, soybeans and alfalfa to provide for his wife, Holly, and daughters, Willa, Malia and Emery. But Bergler is also a passionate deer hunter and serious conservationist who's willing to think outside the box when it comes to land management.

"About 20 years ago, I talked my dad into giving me a half-acre to devote to a food plot for deer," Bergler said. "He thought I was crazy. Our neighbors thought I was crazy. But I took a bag of Imperial White-tail Clover and planted it in that plot. Then the deer started coming, and suddenly I didn't seem so crazy anymore."

In the decades since, Bergler has become more sophisticated in his use of food plots. He has also learned to balance his need to turn a profit from his land with his desire to make those acres attractive to deer and other wildlife.

"About 70 of my acres are wooded, and I've placed all my food plots on the perimeter, so deer have to go through them to get to my row crops," he said. "This reduces the impact deer have on my corn and beans."

But Bergler and his friend Mike Steinfeldt have rethought basic farming practices that have been long-established in the region. He's eliminated fall plowing from his chore list and uses cover crops to reduce erosion, improve soil health and feed his cattle. Tossing aside convention in his farming operation led him to re-examine food plotting practices for whitetails.

"About a decade ago, I took a whirly-bird spreader to sow brassicas between the rows of my soybean plots," he said. "As soon as the leaves were turning yellow, I waited until there was rain in the forecast and seeded them. So, the rains gave me the soil moisture I needed, and then the bean leaves fell on top, and boom, I had a green food plot right in there with my soybeans."

That success led Bergler to expand the concept.

"I'm always trying to think of new ways to farm, and my food plots are my test lab for new techniques," he said. "For example, I decided to try the same techniques I used on inter-seeding my bean plots with corn, and it worked."

After some experimentation, Bergler learned that by waiting until

the corn plants had thrown three or four leaves ("They're usually about 9 inches tall, or as high as your average work boots," he said), he seeds directly between the rows.

"I have an air-seeder, which is a hydraulic fan that broadcasts seed," he said. "I mount it on a rotary hoe that I can set to basically tickle the dirt if I want to. The food plot seed falls between the rows and then germinates. I've had deer find and start coming to those inter-seeded fields on my production ground when the plants were only 2 inches tall. In fact, I've watched them walk across a bean field to get to it."

When the corn canopies, Bergler said, the food plot species go dormant for a time. Later, when corn stalks start drying down and allowing sunlight back in, the brassicas and other food plot crops come back to life and grow until early winter, when freezing temps again stop growth. After the corn harvest, the brassicas are fully exposed and available to deer or Bergler's cattle. In essence, he's created a two-fer situation: continuing the conventional practices of the row-cropper but adding a second use for the same fields.

Bucking Farming Tradition

Naturally, that flies in the face of what Bergler was originally taught as a farmer and defies the many accepted practices in the region.

"The norm here has always been that as soon as the combines are done with the harvest, the fall tillage equipment comes out," he said. "And then after spring planting, herbicides and pesticides are used to ensure maximum yield. The no-till practices we're using and the reduced reliance on spraying to kill weeds and bugs obviously go against many of those traditions."

But Bergler insists the benefits outweigh any drawbacks.

"Sometimes, I do notice a hit when it comes to production in my corn or bean fields," he said. "But then I look at the money I've saved when it comes to inputs (herbicides and pesticides) and the fuel it takes to apply them, and I usually come out ahead."


Bergler is also emphatic about the benefits to soil and overall ecology health that result from his methods.

"For starters, this is hilly country, and erosion is a huge problem," he said. "Fall plowing results in a lot of bare dirt right at that spring thaw period when a lot of that erosion occurs. It blows my mind how many farmers around here have to reshape waterways or hire heavy equipment guys to come in and push dirt around that's moved downhill. In my mind, if I have to pay a dozer operator a thousand bucks to come in and rework a waterway, I'm not only out of that money, it's time to rethink things."

Cover crops and no-till practices have led to healthier soil on Bergler's ground.

"I've got better nutrient cycling because I've got living roots in the soil pretty much all the time," he said. "And using different cover crops has allowed me to attract more pollinators to my farm, which I feel good about. The health of our planet literally hinges on those."

And of course, Bergler knows his regenerative farming practices have resulted in better deer hunting. Last season, his 11-year old daughter killed a fantastic 10-point buck that was a regular on his interseeded plots. Bergler's best buck was a 5-½ year old giant-bodied deer that grew up eating in food plots devoted to deer and between the rows of the corn and beans that feed Bergler's family.

"I love to farm, and I love my deer," he said. "And it's really satisfying when I can combine those two passions instead of having them fight each other." 



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Imperial Whitetail

BEETS & GREENS

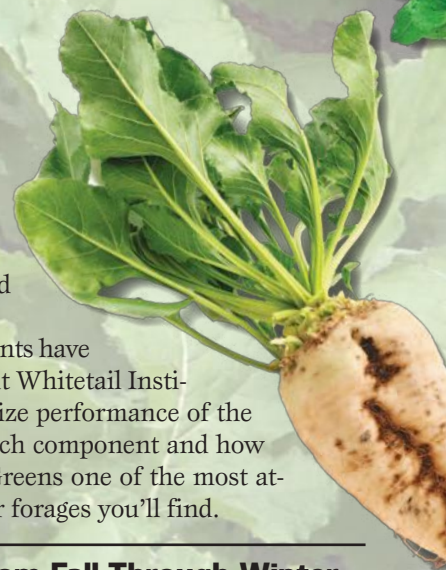
Attraction, Attraction, Attraction!

Beets & Greens is a diverse blend of Whitetail Institute brassicas that's designed to grow quickly, attract deer and provide them with a variety of food options in the same food plot throughout the fall and winter. And as is the case with other Whitetail Institute seed blends, Beets & Greens includes proprietary forage components that are only available in Whitetail Institute products.

Each component of Beets & Greens has been carefully selected using a broad range of criteria, including attractiveness to deer, rapid establishment, prolific growth and abundant production. The components have been blended in the exact ratios that Whitetail Institute testing has shown will maximize performance of the stand. Let's look more closely at each component and how it contributes to making Beets & Greens one of the most attractive, prolific fall-through-winter forages you'll find.

Exceptional Attraction from Fall Through Winter

Tall Tine Turnip: Tall Tine Turnip is the only turnip variety ever scientifically developed specifically for food plots for deer. Forage experimentation on wild, free-ranging deer has proven Tall Tine Turnip



to be the most attractive turnip variety the Whitetail Institute has ever tested.

To develop Tall Tine Turnip, Whitetail Institute agronomists painstakingly selected and tested numerous existing turnip varieties; isolated those that exhibited the best attractiveness to deer and then protected them from further browsing to let them produce seed. That seed was then put back into testing the next year, and the process of developing the most attractive turnip variety continued for the next six years. Other selection criteria besides attractiveness were rapid establishment, growth and the production of high tonnage.

Tall Tine Turnip produces abundant foliage and large, sweet tubers. The foliage provides variety with other brassicas in Beets & Greens, as they begin to attract deer during the early hunting season and become even sweeter with the first frosts of fall. The turnip tubers continue to attract deer and provide them with critical nutrition through the late hunting season.

Sugar Beets: Most hunters already know how exceptionally attractive sugar beets can be. In fact, sugar beets are so high in sugar they're commercially grown throughout the world for sugar production. Sugar beet tops, which offer deer substantial levels of protein and carbohydrates, are highly attractive to deer immediately, most often even before frosts arrive. And the abundant forage keeps attracting deer into the late season and beyond. And the beets underground also keep

attracting deer throughout the late hunting season.

WINA 210 Kale: WINA 210 is a kale variety developed by the Whitetail Institute according to the same stringent protocols followed in developing Tall Tine Turnip for use in food plots for deer.

Not all kales are the same. Some are coarse and indigestible. The leaves of kale varieties grown mostly for ornamental purposes are technically edible, but they aren't nearly as palatable as other varieties. Also, some kales form tight heads instead of loose leaves — for example, the cabbages you see in grocery stores. Some kale varieties don't grow as quickly or as tall as others, making them less suitable for food plots. WINA 210 Kale suffers none of those drawbacks. It's a cultivar that grows quickly and produces large, individual leaves instead of a head, and the leaves are extremely attractive to deer.

WINA 412 Radish: WINA 412 Radish helps maximize the attraction of the stand during the long term by adding variety and more tuber offerings to the plot. (If you'd like more information about WINA 412 Radish, check out the article on the Whitetail Institute's new Ravish starting on page 44 of this issue of *Whitetail News*.)

Additional Benefit: Soil Tilth

In addition to serving as food sources for deer, the Tall Tine Turnips and WINA 412 Radishes in Beets & Greens also provide additional benefits beyond the normal life of the stand by improving the "tilth" of heavier, compacted soils.

Soil Tilth: Tilth refers to the physical condition of soil as it relates to the soil's ability to grow crops. It's determined by specific physical characteristics of the soil, including how well or poorly the soil can hold moisture and how well or poorly it's aerated. Soils with good tilth have spaces that allow water to infiltrate and move, adequate levels of oxygen for roots to grow, and also acceptable levels of moisture and nutrients. Generally, heavier soils with a high clay content are especially prone to poor soil tilth because of compaction.

In addition to being extremely attractive to deer and serving as sources of food for deer during fall and winter, the underground tubers formed by WINA 412 Radish and Tall Tine Tubers help create such spaces in soils with poor tilth through bio-drilling, which is the process of using plants that can drill down as they grow, even in compacted soil.

For example, WINA 412 Radish produces tubers that can push several feet deep, even into compacted clay soils and grow as thick as soft-drink bottles — much larger than the small, round radishes we commonly see in grocery stores. In addition to aerating the soil as they grow, any turnip and radish tubers remaining the spring after planting also add organic matter to the soil as they break down.

Conclusion

Available in 3-pound bags that will plant ½ acre and 12-pound bags that will plant 2 acres, Beets & Greens comes ready to plant, including the Whitetail Institute's Rainbond seed coating, which maximizes seedling survivability by absorbing moisture from the soil and keeping it next to the seeds as they sprout and grow. If you're looking for a unique brassica planting for fall that includes highly attractive brassicas forages and boosts attraction even further by offering multiple food sources to deer from fall through winter, give Beets & Greens a try. Your deer and taxidermist will thank you for it. 🍷



The combination of foliage above ground and tubers underground from Beets & Greens helps ensure deer use the plot throughout both the early and late hunting seasons.



The Many Benefits of Brassicas

By Gerald Almy

Brassicas might be the perfect plant for food plots from fall through winter.

Maybe that's not an exact quote, but such statements were common when these large-leaved, bluish-green plants burst onto the food plot scene when the Whitetail Institute first introduced them as part of their No-Flow blend. Brassicas were especially praised as the ultimate late-season forage for attracting and feeding deer and also providing important benefits for the soil and environment.

I wasn't in the mood for such testimonials the first time I planted this forage on my 117 acres in Virginia. To me, the experience was akin to a football team that starts 0-3. Maybe the season won't be a failure but began to look that way.

Sure, my plot of Winter-Greens came up quickly. And it wasn't much trouble to plant. I just spread the tiny seeds on a smooth, firm soil bed, cultipacked it lightly and waited. When it was up, the field grew fast, even with sparse rains.

But the most important question was what deer thought. They walked past that plot to access my other planting, Imperial Whitetail Clover. Others fed in a Whitetail Oats Plus plot nearby while casting a wary eye toward the new food.

Things changed suddenly in early October. A hunt in another state took me away for a while. When I returned, the Winter-Greens plot had been hammered. It was hard to believe that was the same half-acre that had 2-foot tall plants when I left town.

That evening, although much of the plot was gone, deer still worked on the remaining plants. Better, later in the week, I connected on one of my best bucks ever on that new forage — a heavy-beamed 10-pointer.

That's the way it is on some properties with brassicas. Sometimes, deer just don't seem attracted to this food immediately. But when frosty nights arrive, starches in those plants convert to sugars, and the large, tender leaves suddenly have a strong appeal to whitetails.

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

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Tubers from Tall Tine Turnips (shown in above photo) and WINA 412 radishes provide additional extremely attractive food for whitetails throughout the late hunting season.

Picture a bowl of cereal. It's kind of bland. But sprinkle on a bit of sugar and a few slices of banana, and the product suddenly becomes palatable. (My apologies to health fanatics; I still need a touch of sugar on my Wheaties.)

The good thing about brassicas is that when deer taste the plants after the sugar content has increased, they'll hit them hard the next season and every season thereafter, oftentimes before any frost affects the plants. Sure, more deer will flock to brassicas after cold snaps but deer will also eat some brassicas in the early season as well.

Benefits of Brassicas

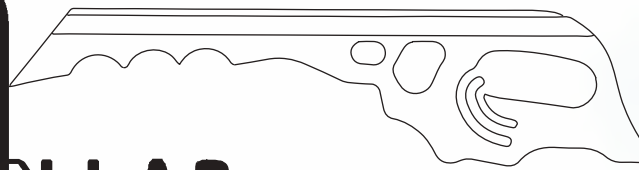
"Brassica crops have a number of beneficial attributes," according to the United States Department of Agriculture. "These include rapid

fall growth, high biomass production, a well-developed taproot, excellent nutrient-scavenging ability, competitiveness with other plants and special pest-resistance capabilities." Further, these plants are also great for reducing erosion and topsoil loss on sloped land.

Brassicas are high in digestible fiber, selenium and vitamin C and with their huge leaves, each plant offers a large amount of food to deer.

One of the most important benefits of Whitetail Institute brassicas is their large size and height. That makes them readily accessible even under deep snow. Even if deer demolish the green tops, the Whitetail Institute's brassica products, Winter-Greens, Beets & Greens, Tall Tine Tubers, Destination and Ravish also have tubers deer will dig up and consume in late winter.

If you have grown food plots for several years with only disking or tilling between planting your soil is likely compacted. The plants you

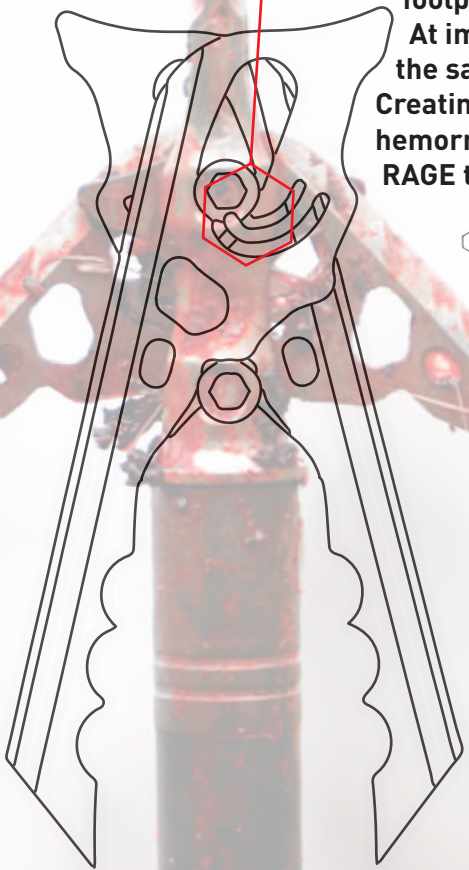


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sow might do OK, but they probably can't dig down beyond the first few inches to obtain moisture or nutrients — a condition called hardpan. Brassicas offer a perfect way to correct this, short of deep plowing.

Many of the tubers in these seed blends grow a deep taproot that breaks up soil, drilling right through hardpan. This helps break up dense soil, alleviates compaction and aerates the dirt, allowing oxygen and moisture to penetrate.

So, plant brassicas for deer and hunting, but also plant them for the health of your soil.

Weed Weapon

In my three-decades plus of food plotting, I'd say controlling weeds and grasses is the No. 1 challenge. That brings up another benefit of Whitetail Institute brassicas. These brassicas grow so aggressively they choke out most unwanted weeds and grasses. They offer a great way to prepare a plot for a future planting of a perennial, such as Alfa Rack Plus, Imperial Whitetail Clover, Fusion or Chic Magnet, or a warm-season annual blend such as PowerPlant.

WINA Brassica Products: Which Ones to Plant?

The Whitetail Institute has many products that include brassicas. The ones I have turned to most often are Tall Tine Tubers and Winter-Greens. The first contains a mixture of the best turnip varieties deer prefer, including the company's proprietary Tall Tine Turnip.

Winter-Greens also includes Tall Tine Turnips and the Whitetail Institute's WINA 210 kale. This kale was found to be four times more attractive than other kales in side-by-side field tests and is very cold tolerant.

These seed blends along with Beets & Greens, Destination and Ravish should be the backbone plantings for your brassica program.

The Institute's brassica products (with the exception of Ravish) contain mixtures of plants so one component is always reaching peak palatability or growth, taking pressure off other plants in the blend and ensuring that one plant doesn't crowd out others. This variety also offers something to appeal to deer throughout the hunting season.

Vision is an excellent choice if you want a year-round perennial plot with some brassica mixed in for extra appeal during hunting season. The clover and chicory offer nearly year-round attraction, and the WINA 210 kale provides forage in fall and through the coldest months. For kill plots in the woods and areas that can't be worked extensively with heavy equipment, Bow Stand and Secret Spot are perfect choices.

On larger fields you can plow and prepare, Pure Attraction is a top choice of brassicas mixed with Whitetail Oats. The tender oats offer early attraction, and the brassicas become even more attractive later after the first frost.

Planting Brassicas

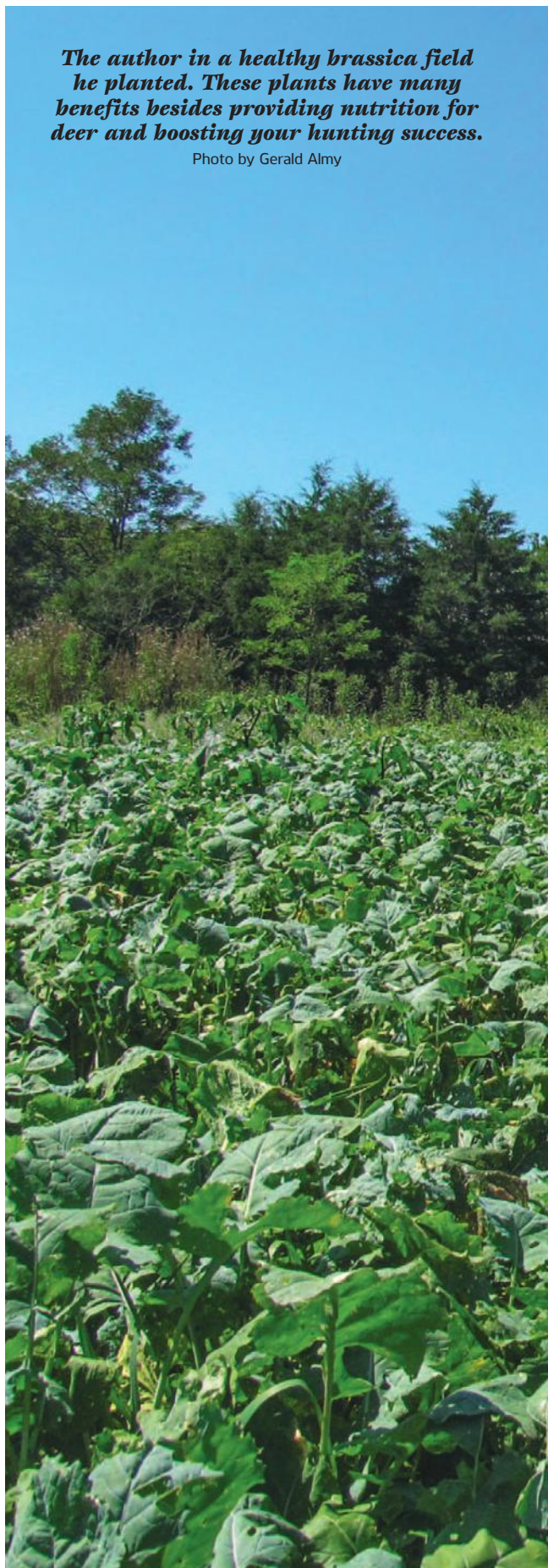
It's optional but you can kill off existing vegetation with a non-selective herbicide first. Whether you decide to spray or not, till the soil and prepare a smooth seedbed. Cultipack it or use a weighted fence-type drag to smooth the bed. Then broadcast the seeds at the recommended rate. If you used a drag to smooth the plot, simply spread the seeds and do nothing else. If the plot was firmed with a cultipacker, go over it again with a cultipacker after seeding for good seed-to-soil contact.

A final piece of advice is to always rotate your annual plots between various types of plants. Never plant brassicas more than two consecutive years to avoid poorer performing plots.

Give some of the Whitetail Institute brassica seed mixtures a try if you haven't already. And if you've used one or two, experiment with others. You and your deer will be glad you did and after the first frost of fall arrive, make sure you are on the downwind side of the plot with an arrow knocked or your finger on the safety of your firearm. 🦌

The author in a healthy brassica field he planted. These plants have many benefits besides providing nutrition for deer and boosting your hunting success.

Photo by Gerald Almy







NEW

Imperial Whitetail

Destination

Components

Designed for planting in the fall, the Whitetail Institute's new annual, Imperial Whitetail Destination, combines highly attractive Whitetail Institute components to deliver an incredibly lush, palatable food source with phenomenal attractiveness to deer from fall through winter. All five components are proprietary to the Whitetail Institute and are only available in Whitetail Institute products.

Simply stated, Destination is one of the most attractive fall annual food plot products the Whitetail Institute has ever offered. Destination is designed, first and foremost, to be extremely attractive to deer. Further, Destination is formulated to establish quickly, exhibit early seedling vigor, grow rapidly and provide high nutritional content. Again, while the Whitetail Institute considers all these characteristics important, the most important of all is attractiveness to deer.

Destination meets the Whitetail Institute's superior-performance requirements through its components—five proprietary Whitetail Institute seeds that have all proven themselves through our research efforts and over time to be extremely attractive to deer. As such, Destination is an excellent example of the Whitetail Institute's practice of developing blends of complementary forages in order to sustain

maximum attractiveness of the stand over the long term.

To explain, you may have noticed that most Whitetail Institute food plot products are blends of different plant varieties. That's because one type of forage plant can rarely maximize performance in all the categories for which the Whitetail Institute tests. That's why when developing Destination the Whitetail Institute thoroughly researched and selected multiple complementary plant varieties to boost attraction for the early hunting season as well as the late hunting season, and then combined them in the optimum ratios as shown by Whitetail Institute testing. The exhaustive research and testing to develop food plot products that perform up to the Institute's relentless expectations is one reason Whitetail Institute food plot products continue to dominate the market. This is accomplished by combining various components in different proportions and then testing them on wild, free-ranging deer until the Institute identifies the optimum seed varieties and ratios to maximize attraction over the longest period of time. Each of the forage components in Destination were selected and then combined with the other components so that no matter what time of fall or winter it is, deer will have multiple extremely attractive forages available to them.

Early Fall Through Late Fall. Three forage components of Destination are primarily responsible for its early-season performance: Whitetail Oats, WINA 214 Pea and Alex Berseem clover.

The exceptional attractiveness of Whitetail Oats will come as no surprise to anyone who's familiar with another Whitetail Institute annual food plot product, Whitetail Oats PLUS. When it comes to attracting deer, all oat varieties definitely are NOT the same. In a nutshell, Whitetail Oats, the backbone component in Whitetail Oats

PLUS, is the most attractive oat variety the Whitetail Institute has ever tested. (You can find out more about Whitetail Oats PLUS in the article on page 10 of this issue of *Whitetail News*.) Winter Peas varieties also vary quite a bit in their attractiveness to deer. WINA 204 Pea is a high-sugar pea that has consistently proven itself in side-by-side cafeteria tests across North America to be vastly more attractive than any other pea variety the Whitetail Institute tested. WINA 204 Pea is also high in protein and cold tolerant. Alex Berseem is an annual clover that has long performed double duty in other Whitetail Institute products —as a complementary early attractant in many Whitetail Institute annuals, and as a fast green-up component in many Whitetail Institute perennials. In both cases, its primary benefit is to attract deer to a food plot as soon after planting as possible.

Fall Through Winter. Destination's two other forage components, WINA 210 Kale and WINA 412 Radish, complement the early fall components by increasing tonnage and boosting attraction even further by adding variety to the planting. Once frosts arrive, enzymes in the kale and radishes convert starches in the foliage to sugars, making them even more attractive to deer and providing deer with high carbohydrates through winter. The thick, deeply rooted tubers produced by WINA 412 Radish also continue to act as a much-needed food source for deer through the coldest winter months.

Destination is available in 9-pound bags that plant 1/4 acre. Sites with moderately light to medium-heavy soils are optimum. Avoid wet bottom areas. Destination requires a minimum of 3-4 hours of filtered or indirect sunlight a day. For additional information about Destination, go to whitetailinstitute.com or call the Whitetail Institute at (800) 688-3030. 🦌

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Imperial Whitetail[®]
***Destination*[™]**

- Extremely attractive to deer from fall through winter.
- A high-protein, high-energy forage for deer.
- Contains the following Whitetail Institute Proprietary seeds: WINA 204 Peas, WINA 412 Radish, Whitetail Oats, WINA 210 Kale and Alex Berseem Clover.
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Whitetail Institute RECORD BOOK BUCKS...

Michael Robinson – Missouri



I have been planting Winter-Greens and Beets & Greens at my house for the past 4 years and have killed two giants (one 180 inch) over them. It's a small plot in a country/suburb environment and the deer hammer it. We call it the "killing field." It's less than 1/4-acre and we have seen 17 deer in it at one time. If you look close at one of the enclosed pictures you can see the deer trying to get back into the food plot at the top of the hill (top left) despite us. I killed the 180 on my 51st birthday, what a day!



Bill Knight – Iowa

Just wanted to thank Whitetail Institute for doing it again. We've used Imperial Whitetail Clover for over 20 years with great results. We've killed dozens of Pope & Young and bigger bucks. Whitetail News published a photo of my 191 inch buck a year or so ago and a photo of a 200-plus inch buck that we killed was on the cover a few years before that.



We've also had great results with Winter-Greens, Tall Tine Tufers and Extreme. This past season, I decided to replant one of my Imperial Whitetail Clover fields and when I called the Whitetail Institute, one of their consultants recommended I rotate Whitetail Oats Plus in this fall and come back next year and replant the Imperial Whitetail Clover. He said the Whitetail Oats Plus would benefit from the nitrogen the clover had left in the soil and that the deer would love it.

Based on the results we've had with other Whitetail Institute products; I took his recommendation and as they say a picture is worth 1,000 words. Photos 1 and

2 are from Nov. 3 and show Iowa deer and turkey love Whitetail Oats Plus.

Having all those does piling into the Whitetail Oats Plus paid off on Nov. 14. I snuck in and was hunting about 100 yards from one of my Whitetail Oats Plus plots that morning and the woods were alive with deer. Soon after getting in my stand the deer started to come by. They headed from the Whitetail Oats Plus to a bedding area. The buck in photo 3 scores 162 inches and he was cruising along coming from the Whitetail Oats Plus and looking for a hot doe and he gave me a 20-yard shot with my bow.



(Photo 4) shows a 150-plus inch class buck my friend, Doug killed on our property.

Whitetail Institute, you have another winner with Whitetail Oats Plus and thanks for all you do.

Cj Turner – Illinois

“Boys, I just tagged out! I can’t believe this, booner down!” This is the text I sent to a few of my best friends on Nov. 3. I had just killed my second buck of the year and was elated. Not only was it my second of the year, it was the second five-year-old of the year. Both deer had been on my radar for three years and both blew up to giant status this season. The first, a 161-inch main frame ten (photo 1) that I had passed several times last season and gotten tons of pictures of, came in on the first cold front of October. He had read the script and walked into the edge of an Alfa-Rack Plus plot, giving me a quick but easy 10-yard shot just as he ran off a 3-year-old. Getting that buck had made my season, but I knew there was another deer in the area that deserved my attention.



So, after a couple day celebration eating generic brand mini muffins and sinking into the recliner I got back to work.

The “other deer” was probably a net Boone main frame 12 and I had a great idea of what he would be up to in the coming weeks. I literally had hundreds of pictures of him growing up over the past few seasons and had passed him more than five times. I’ve enclosed one of the photos (photo 2). I figured if I could plan my hunts per the weather and his historical early November marches in daylight, I could close the deal. Sure enough, the very first hunt I went back in after him, he popped up and worked his way in to 25 yards cruising along the downwind edge of a bedding area. You know the feeling you get when you draw the first couple of numbers in the Powerball? That feeling of too good to be true excitement? Well that feeling was settling in, but right then he decided to turn and walk straight away from me, leaving me standing there humbled and somewhat heartbroken. Not to be discouraged, I kept after him. He was blowing my cameras up day and night and I knew it was just a matter of time.

On this day I had decided to hunt on the ground with a good amount of cover and my back against a large tree and a tactic I have used successfully many times before. Just as daylight broke, I saw a large bodied deer only 50 yards away, working its way towards me. Finally, a doe popped out and scooted by me at less than 20 yards. I caught movement behind her, and it was him! He made a scrape, wasted more time than you can imagine and finally worked into a position that I could draw. At the shot, I just knew he was smoked and that was confirmed by him piling up in sight within 35 yards. Putting my hands on that deer and capping my best season thus far was indescribable. (photo 3)

These bucks have a special place in my mind. I had literally dreamed of this exact October food plot/November rut, tag out scenario thousands of times. Finally, I had put in the work to create a beautiful plot, watched it grow some magnificent animals and had it all come full circle with an early season closer and a taxidermy bill. I seriously can’t thank Whitetail Institute enough for their dedication to research and development. It is continuing to help whitetails flourish year after year, offering hunters food, fun and family memories that will last a lifetime.



Matt Day – Ohio

I’ve been using Whitetail Institute products big time for six years. I’ve used Imperial Whitetail Clover and Tall Tine Tubers and they work great. Last year a photo of the buck I killed in one of my Imperial Whitetail Clover plots that scored 189-plus inches ran in *Whitetail News*.

Well this year it happened again. I had thousands of pictures of another giant, many of the pictures in one of my Imperial Whitetail Clover plots. A good friend of mine, John White was hunting in the woods off one of my Imperial Whitetail Clover plots and killed this giant with his crossbow. The buck scored 180 4/8 inches (see photo).

I’m a firm believer in and dedicated customer of Whitetail Institute. Thank you, Whitetail Institute.



Mike Marsteller – Indiana

We have been using Whitetail Institute products for the past seven years; Extreme, No-Plow, Winter-Greens, Tall Tine Tubers, BowStand and Secret Spot. Over the years we have noticed increased body size and antler growth. The plots promote daytime



movement, but more importantly keeps our target bucks close to home!

Two years ago, I killed a buck I called “Lucky” in Indiana with a bow and he scored 186 inches (photo 1). This past season I killed a buck I called “Mr. Rogers” in Missouri with a rifle and he scored 160 (photo 2).

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info@whitetailinstitute.com

or send them to:

Whitetail News, Attn: Record Book Bucks, 239 Whitetail Trail, Pintlala, AL 36043

NUTRITION VS. ATTRACTION:

Comparing Nutritional Products and Lollipops

By **Matt Harper**

Photos by the Author

The older I get, the less tolerant I become of products that don't live up to their billing. You might think I'm getting cantankerous, but it could be a symptom of overabundant misleading or false advertising.



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A few years ago, I purchased my first new four-wheeler. One day, as I was pulling a 6-foot cultipacker, my quad overheated. I stopped and let it cool down for a few minutes, and a half-hour later, the temperature light glowed amber again. I decided to stop before blowing up the engine. I was not happy or impressed by the machine. I resolved to get to the bottom of the situation, so I called the dealership and demanded to talk to the service department manager. When I told him the situation, his vexing reply did nothing to improve my attitude. He basically said that all four-wheelers aren't meant to pull heavy things such as a 6-foot cultipacker.

My carefully framed rebuttal was something like, "Well, that's a load of crap. It shows those things on commercials pulling freaking redwoods around."

He calmly replied, "Well yeah, those are commercials. It doesn't mean that's really what you're supposed to do with them."

My ATV story is not uncommon, as the world is full of advertising created by marketers trying to outdo each other at the expense of realism. It's simple sales and marketing theory. The more fantastic we can make a product seem, the more likely consumers will buy it. If you stretch a few details in the process, so be it.

You only need to do a quick search on deer minerals to find a plethora of products that infer they will produce the next world-record whitetail or be so powerfully attractive that deer will come from neighboring states to your property. If you doubt that, make your own search. The claims made by many manufacturers are not far from my slightly exaggerated examples.

However, most of those products have little — if any — research to back up the claims. Unlike the livestock and poultry industry, in which claims must be scientifically proven, the wildlife market can make claims without any proof. Additionally, most people do not have the nutritional training to analyze a product to determine the likely validity of claims. This article will not make you a PhD nutritionist, but it might help you determine the true nature of a deer mineral or deer attractant and which category the product likely fits.

Minerals and Attractants

It's generally true that deer minerals and deer attractants comprise



Trace minerals are vital for deer nutrition even though needed in small amounts.

separate categories, but that's too large of a brush stroke. Technically, to be a deer mineral, a product must be composed primarily of mineral. That doesn't mean the product is necessarily a beneficial nutritional supplement and designed as such. It simply means it's comprised of mineral, and you can feed it to deer.


Therefore, when I say a deer mineral, I mean a product formulated with the specific purpose of being nutritionally beneficial to deer by supplying the needed macro and trace minerals that will help improve performance characteristics. If a product purported to be a deer mineral primarily contains components designed to attract deer and has little actual nutritional benefit, I would throw that into the attractant group. Of course, some products will lean one way or the other and some are somewhere in the middle, making it more difficult to determine their true nature. Later, I will discuss a few things you can look at to help you make the best decision on which end of the spectrum a product seems to fall.

Attractants, likewise, is a general term under which many products fall. Some attractants are pheromone based, such as doe estrus or rutting buck, which attract deer based on triggering sexual drive. Other similar products simply smell like deer and are designed more for cov-



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ering your scent but in some cases attract deer. Some attractants are botanically based, claiming to have compounds that mimic natural botanicals to which deer are attracted. And some attractants appeal to a deer's nose and taste buds. That latter group is what I'll call attractants in this article, and we'll compare it to deer mineral.

What Should Be in a Deer Mineral?

As mentioned, I consider a true deer mineral to be designed first and foremost to improve the mineral nutritional plane of a deer herd to better all facets of deer performance. To accomplish that, appropriate amounts of macro and trace minerals must be formulated into the product at specific ratios. Macro minerals are those needed in large supply for normal life to occur. In a deer mineral, those typically include calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium and sodium.

Of those macro minerals, calcium has the highest nutritional requirement and therefore should make up a large portion of a deer mineral mix. Exact levels of calcium, like all macro and trace minerals, might vary from product to product, as deer nutritionists differ in their opinions on the exact supplemental needs. Regardless, calcium should be present in the highest quantity. Calcium is nutritionally vital for many functions, including muscle contraction, milk production, antler growth, and skeletal growth and maintenance.

An analysis of a hardened antler shows calcium comprises the largest mineral portion — about 22 percent. On a product label under the ingredients section, the calcium source will typically be calcium carbonate. Because the ingredient section of a tag or label should be in order of highest to lowest in the mix, calcium carbonate will typically be one of the first three to four ingredients listed.

Phosphorus is normally second in terms of importance in a quality deer mineral. It has many functions, including energy transfer and metabolism, as well as protein synthesis. Like calcium, phosphorus is also critical for antler growth and makes up about 11 percent of a hardened antler. Phosphorus sources typically found in a deer mineral are dicalcium phosphate or monocalcium phosphate, both of which provide phosphorus and calcium. In a deer mineral, one or both of those phosphorus sources should be near the top of the ingredient list.

Third on the list of macro minerals is magnesium. It's important in carbohydrate and fat metabolism, as well as bone and antler growth. A hardened antler is about 3 percent magnesium. Although there are several sources of magnesium, including magnesium sulfate and magnesium chloride, the most commonly used source is magnesium oxide. In most quality deer minerals, magnesium oxide will be in the top five to six ingredients listed on a label.

Potassium plays a major role in osmotic or fluid balance and is also involved in metabolism. It's often in adequate supplies in green and growing vegetation but is sometimes found in deer minerals, especially when used in areas with vegetation that tends to be lower in potassium. There are multiple sources of potassium, but typically you will see potassium chloride or potassium sulfate on the label.

Finally, sodium typically comes in the form of sodium chloride, or salt. Sodium has several functions, but one of the most important is maintaining osmotic pressure and water metabolism. Sodium, or salt, is highly sought after by deer, especially in spring and summer, when they are consuming lush, green, growing vegetation. As mentioned, green vegetation is high in potassium but low in sodium. Because sodium and potassium work on opposite sides of osmotic balance, if a diet is high in potassium but low in sodium, deer will become "salt



Vitamins are critical for nutritional supplements. For example, vitamin D transports calcium and is vital for antler growth. 30-06 mineral products contain a high level of this critical nutrient.

hungry" and search out any source of sodium. That's true for all herbivores.

Trace minerals are those needed in smaller quantities but still vital for life. Quality deer minerals will contain zinc, copper, manganese, iron, selenium, iodine and cobalt. These trace minerals have unique functions and are vital for maximum performance. A small sample of these functions includes immunity, metabolism, lactation, bone and antler growth, and specific interactions with vitamins. Zinc, copper, manganese and iron can be sourced from oxides and sulfates. However, as with iron and copper, oxide forms have little to no digestibility. Selenium will normally be listed on the label as sodium selenite. Iodine will be listed as calcium iodate or EDDI, and cobalt is often listed as cobalt sulfate or carbonate. On a label, zinc, iron and manganese will usually be listed after the macro minerals but not necessarily in that order. Copper typically follows next, followed by selenium, iodine and cobalt, again with the latter three not necessarily in that order.

The other components in a quality deer mineral are actually not minerals but are still important nutrients. They include vitamins A, D and E. Like minerals, these fat-soluble antioxidant vitamins have many important functions. One involves vitamin D and its relationship to calcium and calcium transport, which lets it play an indirect but vital role in antler growth and milk production.

Is it a Deer Mineral or Attractant?

So how can you tell the difference between a product primarily designed for nutrition and one designed for attraction? First, it's important to note that a deer mineral must also be highly attractive. No matter how good its nutrition, if a deer won't consume a product in adequate quantities, its benefit will not be realized. Spinach and other vegetables might be good for you, but you won't get many nutrients from them if you don't eat them or only consume a tiny portion.

A deer mineral must have an attractant component to encourage consumption. Often, that component is the same as those found in a

purely attractant product. For example, we know salt is highly sought after by deer, especially in spring and summer, driven by the need for sodium to balance out potassium. That's why many attractant products are primarily salt or some other sodium source. The attractive power of salt is why most deer minerals have salt in them.

The difference in a salt-based attractant and a mineral that uses salt as an attractant is the level of salt in the mix compared to other minerals and vitamins. Although deer need salt, it doesn't play a major role in many of the functions we hope to influence, such as antler growth. Therefore, the trick is to put in only enough salt to meet nutritional demands and to get deer to consume the other minerals and vitamins.


This might seem a little confusing, but the point is to use a product with the right amount of salt. In my experience, that will be 40 percent and preferably less total salt in the mineral. So, if you look at a label and it shows a product contains over 50 percent salt, I would categorize that as more of an attractant than true deer mineral. Remember, salt might also be listed as sodium chloride. An additional bit of evidence is the amount of macro and trace minerals in a product. A product might claim it contains "32 essential minerals," but upon close examination of the tag, you may find it has less than 10 percent total of those minerals and over 90 percent salt.

Salt is not the only attractant used in deer minerals and attractants. Sweets can also be a powerful attractant to deer and come in many shapes and forms. Molasses is a commonly used sweet attractant, along with artificial flavors such as apple, persimmon, berry and vanilla. Those can be effective attractants, and not just as a flavor. Many of the flavors are not really flavors but aromatics, meaning they

smell like what they're supposed to taste like but don't affect the taste of the product.

Components that add flavor to a product are made differently from those that attract aromatically. That doesn't mean aromatic products won't entice a deer to investigate. It's just important to understand it might not improve the flavor. Regardless, many of those sweet-type attractants also claim they're "fortified with minerals." Fortified is a loose term, and as long as a product has a sprinkle of minerals, they can be called fortified. However, that doesn't mean the product will have any real nutritional benefit. To determine the validity of a legitimate mineral source, you must look at the label and search for the amount of mineral and vitamins the product contains. If it's an insignificant amount compared to the attractant portion of the product, it should be considered an attractant, not a mineral, in my opinion.

Conclusion

It is important to point out that this article is not intended to be negative about attractants. Attractants have their place for many deer hunters and can be effective tools for hunting and for using in conjunction with trail cameras. The purpose of this article is to make sure you are not duped into thinking you're getting something you're not. A true deer mineral is a great management tool and can produce tremendous results. Whitetail Institute's 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein have produced years of great results from hunters and researchers across the country. But sometimes other products claim to be mineral products when they should be considered an attractant in my opinion. Hopefully, you're now a bit more equipped to tell the difference. 



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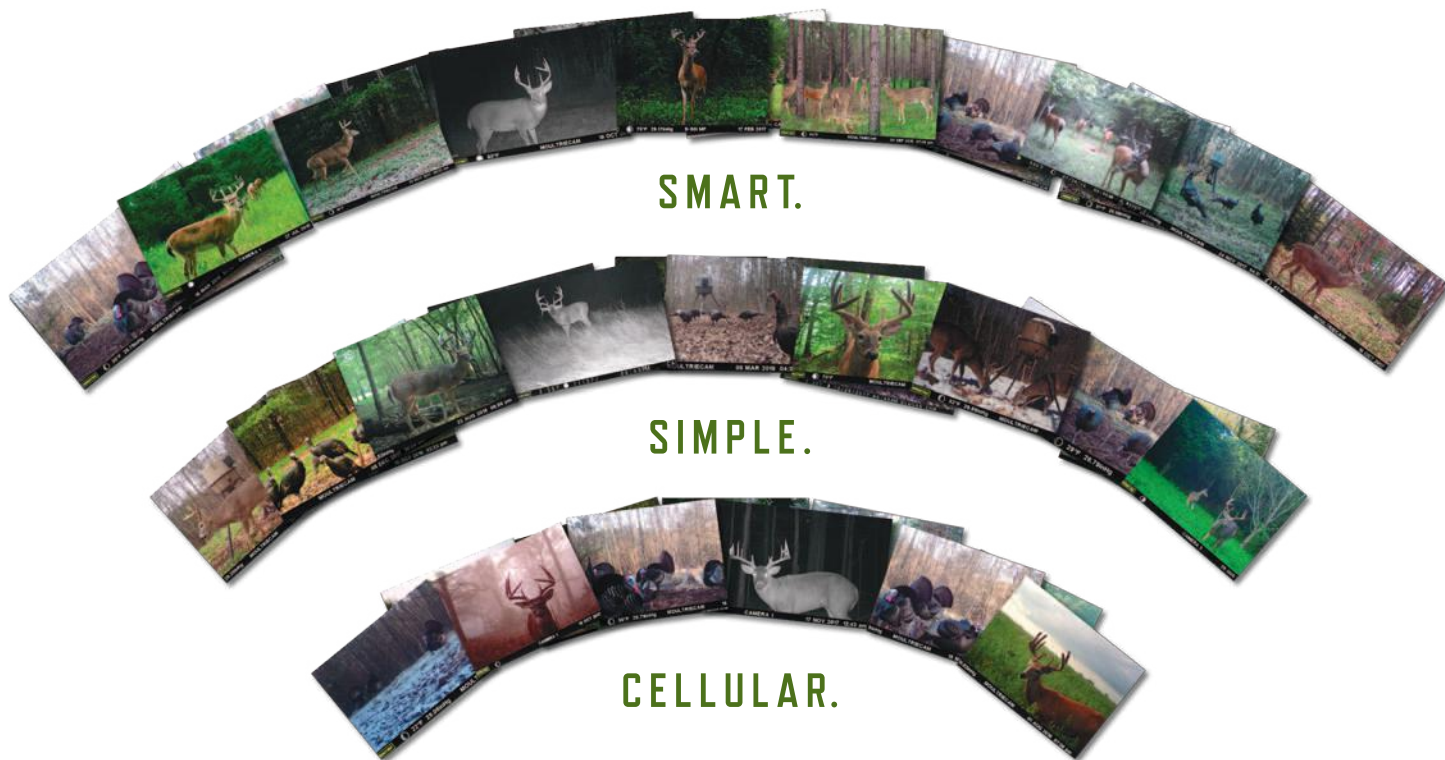
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Components

Perennial Clovers. Whitetail Institute forage products contain plant varieties *available only in Whitetail Institute products*. An example is the perennial clover varieties in Alfa-Rack PLUS, which were genetically developed by the Whitetail Institute through repeated cy-

cles of cross-breeding and goal-oriented selection for traits such as attractiveness to whitetails, protein content, seedling vigor and sustained palatability. These include the Whitetail Institute's proprietary Insight, WT-170, and its newest clover variety, WT-177. These are the very same perennial clovers that are the backbone of the number-one food plot product in the world, Imperial Whitetail Clover.

Forage-Type Alfalfa. Alfa-Rack PLUS also contains alfalfa, *but not just any alfalfa*. The alfalfas in Alfa-Rack PLUS are true "forage alfalfas" (a/k/a "grazing alfalfas"), which are different from ordinary hay-type alfalfas in some very important ways. The most important difference, is that the grazing alfalfas in Alfa-Rack PLUS grow more leaf relative to stem than ordinary hay-type alfalfas. Why is that so important? The answer lies with the small-ruminant digestive system of deer.

Cattle and deer are both ruminant animals, meaning in simplest terms that they chew cud and have four-chambered stomachs. When cattle and deer take in food, they go through a process of chewing, swallowing, regurgitating and re-chewing it ("cud") until it's sufficiently broken down for the animal's stomach to digest it. This mostly involves two of the chambers of the stomach. Once the food is sufficiently broken down, it passes on to another stomach chamber called the "rumen." There, digestive organisms transform the cud into nutrients for the animal.

There's one very important difference, though, between the ruminant digestive systems of cattle and deer: while cattle can digest coarse, tough food, deer can only utilize the most tender forages. That's why you may have noticed that deer are often highly attracted to agricultural alfalfa fields when the plants are young, less attracted after it starts to get tall, and then attracted to it again shortly after mowing, as the plants put on new growth. The reason that happens is one of the best examples you'll find of how important palatability is to deer. The alfalfas in Alfa-Rack PLUS are structured to grow more leaf relative to stem than standard hay-type alfalfas, which extends the period of time they are most attractive, making them a better option for food plots for whitetails.

WINA-100 Perennial Forage Chicory. A third perennial component of Alfa-Rack PLUS, WINA-100 Chicory is also a proprietary Whitetail Institute forage component that's available only in Whitetail Institute products. Other chicories sometimes planted for deer tend to lose palatability rather quickly as they become stemmy and their leaves take on a waxy, leathery texture as they mature. This does not happen with WINA-100 chicory, which produces foliage that is vastly more palatable to deer. WINA-100 chicory can also grow root systems several feet deep, which improves the drought resistance of the blend even further.

Alfa-Rack PLUS is designed for soils that are loam, light clay or heavier. For optimum results, Alfa-Rack PLUS should only be planted in soils with soil pH of 6.5 or higher.

The Whitetail Institute's recommended planting dates, and planting and maintenance instructions, are provided on the back of the product bags as well as at www.whitetailinstitute.com. If you have any questions about Alfa-Rack PLUS, the Whitetail Institute's in-house consultants are standing by to help. Give them a call at (800) 688-3030. The call and the service are free. 🦌



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Hidden Gem: **Create a Public Land Food Plot**

*If you don't own
or lease land, planting
a killer food plot might still
be within your reach.*

By **Darron McDougal**

Let's face it: Private-land deer hunting is simply unattainable for many folks. Leases can cost thousands annually. Likewise, the per-acre price to purchase prime whitetail real estate ranges from \$2,500 to \$5,000 or more. Most can't afford that, and many who can are unable to justify spending money that way. Granted, knocking on doors to gain permission to hunt on private land is always an option, but expect to be denied many times before you get an amen.

Here's the good news: Most states across the country provide public hunting opportunities, which almost all hunters already know. In fact, many of you probably hunt or at least have hunted public land at some point. Maybe you even do it exclusively.

If you have experience with private and public-land hunting, you

know public land tends to be a far cry from private-land hunting. State wildlife agencies sometimes lease out crop rights to farmers or even cultivate food plots to improve the habitat for hunters. The problem is these food sources are typically sore thumbs. That is, anyone who hunts the property can find and hunt them just as easily as you can. Expect competition to be fierce and daylight deer activity minimal on any obvious public-land food plots or ag fields.

Even without pressure, food plots planted by a wildlife agency are rarely in ideal locations for hunting. They may attract deer and other wildlife, but there often isn't a viable ambush location ideal for prevailing winds. Or perhaps the food is simply located within easy sight of roadways, promoting nocturnal behavior. In any case, don't expect to hunt over an obvious or easy-to-reach public-land food plot and kill a whopper buck. You probably have a better chance of being struck by lightning. Maybe not, but you get my point.

That leaves just two more options if you want to hunt a food source on public land without tripping over other hunters. No. 1, try to iden-

With property costing thousands per acre and leases reaching record-high fees, planting a food plot is often misconceived as a rich person's undertaking. But, if planting and the activities entailed therein are allowed on the public land you hunt, it's within reach for blue-collar folks after all.

(Photo courtesy of Darron McDougal)





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tify naturally occurring food sources, such as acorns or fruit trees. Another option is something most haven't considered or thought possible: Plant your own food plot on public land.

Study the Laws

First, let me stress that every state has regulations that govern activities on public lands. Further, each state has multiple classifications of lands that are open to the public for hunting. Some are national forests, some are state-owned lands and others are private lands leased by the state for public hunting. There are others, too.

Each parcel might have specific regulations for planting or manipulating habitat. It may not be allowed at all. It's 100 percent your responsibility to know and follow the laws before you plant a food plot — and the activities entailed therein — on public land.

Risk vs. Reward

If all is clear and you can legally plant a food plot on public land where you hunt, there's more to consider. You must understand that everyone else has the equal right to use the property in any legal manner. That includes hunting over the food plot you worked diligently to create. You must live with that possibility. It's a risk-versus-reward proposition. Obviously, though, the rewards can far outweigh the negatives if you put some forethought into your prospective plot(s) before you scatter seeds, which we'll discuss next.

Find Your Secret Spot

Steve Scott, Whitetail Institute Senior Advisor, suggested smart planning and a tactical approach when locating and planting a secret food plot on public soil.

"Public land is a first-come-first-serve type of deal," he said. "As you try to identify potential planting sites, look specifically for locations that receive little to no pressure. Often, this means hiking as deep as you're physically able to reach a destination where other hunters are less likely to go. A good majority of hunters don't walk too far from their vehicles, so your additional effort can put some distance between you and them. Still, it's public land, and there are no guarantees that you'll have an undisturbed spot all to yourself."

Being a devoted public-land hunter, I rely heavily on the onX Hunt smartphone app to identify potential locations before I set foot on a parcel. HuntStand is another worthy map-based app you can use to identify tough-to-reach locations a mile or more from trails, roadways and parking areas.

If you don't already have one of these apps on your phone and do any amount of public-land hunting, you're missing a vital tool. If I had to choose between purchasing a tree stand to hunt from or one of these map-based apps, I'd go for the app every time. It's that important to my hunting approach.

Planting Time

When you locate a secret spot, Scott recommended being subtle, leaving few to no indications that any activity has transpired.

"Even if you have access to implements, they likely aren't allowed on public lands, especially behind closed gates," he said. "Many public

parcels are restricted solely to foot traffic. That's a good thing. Just imagine how difficult it would be to evade pressure and create a secret plot if folks had unrestricted vehicular access.

"If implements are allowed to be used, they're probably not the best option anyway. Yes, they simplify soil preparation and reduce manual labor, but easier isn't better in this case. The more evidence of your efforts you leave behind — disrupting foliage and making tracks — the more likely folks will become nosy and follow the clues to your secret spot. Try to be as discreet as possible to keep your secret spot a secret."

A garden rake will require much more effort to create an effective food plot, but it reduces the amount of habitat disruptions, thereby masking clues to your activity and keeping most snoopers from finding your secret plot. Further, Whitetail Institute offers two products that are tailored for deep-woods, foot-traffic-only applications inaccessible to heavy implements. BowStand and Secret Spot require minimal soil preparation, and they survive and even thrive where other seed blends often fail. Both are extremely attractive and tolerate cold and drought incredibly well, and they can flourish with a minimum of three hours of broken or direct daily sun exposure.

"Once you find a good location off the beaten path that receives at least three hours of daily sun exposure," Scott said, "if possible and legal, spray existing weeds and grasses with an herbicide. When they die, expose the soil with a rake and/or other hand tools. Next, broadcast fertilizer as suggested on the package of BowStand or Secret Spot. Now, you're ready to plant. With seed-to-soil contact, either product will quickly germinate, establish and grow, creating an effective food

Bolster Your Secret Plot with an Attractant

Know the regulations and laws that govern baiting or placing minerals/attractants for wildlife in your state and county, and on specific public-land parcels you're planning to hunt. Also, find out if it's legal to hunt directly over that bait or attractant. If all is clear, Whitetail Institute's Thrive or Apple Obsession can boost the effectiveness of your secret deep-woods food plot even further.

"I cannot stress it enough: When hunting public ground, make absolute certain that planting a food plot or placing attractants and hunting over them is legal," Steve Scott said.





Once you've narrowed down some potential planting sites on your map-based smartphone app, visit each one to determine planting potential based on the parameters provided within this article. (Photo courtesy of Rebecca McDougal)

source to hunt over without leasing or purchasing land. It's that simple, but I want to remind you once more that you must comply with all laws and regulations."

Back-Up Plans

Even with a tactical approach, someone could learn about and beat

you to your plot. For that reason, you should consider having back-up spots. Ideally, these are places you've also planted in BowStand or Secret Spot.

"If you quietly access your deep-woods food plot, you might be looking at a 30 to 45-minute hike," Scott said. "That means you'll have an equal walk back to the vehicle if you find that someone is already hunting your spot, plus you'll face driving elsewhere and then hiking to a subsequent location. This kills a lot of time. Instead, try to locate and plant at least one back-up spot within a 15 to 20-minute walk from your primary location. That will provide an easy plan B so you can hunt an undisturbed area without having to travel as far and wasting time.

"Also, the Golden Rule applies well to situations where you find another hunter taking advantage of your hard work. No, it isn't nice that they're leveraging an easy ambush from your labor, but they have the equal right to be there. If you plan ahead and have a back-up spot or two, it becomes a smaller issue. Treat other hunters as you'd like to be treated."

Credit Roll

If the public parcel you hunt can legally be planted, investing some effort to create a plot with Whitetail Institute's BowStand or Secret Spot can make your stand location more enticing to deer. You will be creating a deep-woods location that a mature buck can comfortably visit during daylight. It isn't a guarantee obviously, but it can be very effective. Why not be the next to send in a success story and photo? 🦌

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NEW *Imperial Whitetail*

Ravish

The Whitetail Institute's Proprietary Radish Product

*For planting by itself, mixing with other seeds,
or as a topper for existing food plots*

Here's a "heads up" about one of the Whitetail Institute's brand new food plot products for planting this fall: Imperial Whitetail Ravish, featuring the

Whitetail Institute's proprietary WINA 412 Radish.

As versatile as it is attractive, Ravish is a highly attractive forage that can be planted by itself, mixed with other seeds or over-seeded into existing forage stands to provide additional attraction through variety, early season tonnage, and increased availability to deer through winter. And Ravish can even improve the quality of the soil in your food plots.

All radishes are not created equal. WINA 412 radish is unique in several ways. For one, WINA 412 radish is the only radish ever developed specifically for use in food plots for whitetail deer, and it's only available in Whitetail Institute products. And, just like all of the Whitetail Institute's industry-leading food plot products, Ravish has been thoroughly tested across the country to ensure outstanding performance in a



wide range of climates as well as to ensure incredible attraction and extended availability to deer.

Two Sources of Food For Deer. Ravish exhibits rapid germination as well as superior seedling vigor. The foliage develops quickly, providing outstanding tonnage from early fall through late season, and it becomes even sweeter after fall frosts arrive. The radish tubers begin to grow right after germination, continue to grow through the fall, and provide an excellent source of food for deer through the coldest months of the year.

Soil Improvement Aspects. In addition to its incredible ability to attract deer and provide food for them during the fall and winter months, Ravish tubers can actually improve soil structure due to their deep, wide growth characteristics. This can present a number of benefits, whether Ravish is planted by itself, mixed with other seeds or as a topper for an existing food plot.

Unlike the small, round tubers you see on radishes in the grocery store, Ravish tubers grow very large and grow deep into the soil. The space the tubers create in the soil improves soil aeration, which is essential to all plant roots for maximum plant productivity. The tubers also increase soil permeability to water, which decreases rain runoff and improves soil drainage. Finally, any tubers that remain uneaten by deer at the end of winter decompose as spring arrives. This increases soil organic matter, which improves the performance of future plantings.

Ravish is designed for fall planting only. It is available in 2.5 lb. bags, that will plant 1/4 acre when planted alone or up to 1 acre when mixed with other seeds or overseeded into existing stands to add variety, tonnage and attraction. 🦌

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- Rapid germination, emergence & quick development
- Excellent seedling vigor and stand establishment
- Improves overall soil structure and soil aeration which is essential to all plant roots for maximum plant productivity
- Pulls nutrients from deep in the soil profile, returning them to the upper soil column where they become more readily available to other food plot forages
- Produces tons of forage for early & late season attraction



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REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

about Whitetail Institute products...

I just wanted to thank Whitetail Institute for the awesome support and products they provide. When I retired from the Army, I came back home to our family farm. Keep in mind that we never saw that many mature deer on our property. I was skeptical at first about establishing a food plot for deer and turkey but decided to give Whitetail Institute products a try.

Our first plot was Imperial Whitetail Clover and Chic Magnet, and all I can say is WOW! Fast forward a few years now and the results are unbelievable. We now have numerous mature bucks living on our property, to the point neighbors have asked us what we are doing because the deer always seem to be heading for our property. Keep in mind that



our farm is only 63 acres!! Friends and neighbors have begun asking me what we are doing and for advice to improve their deer and I always point them to Whitetail Institute. Some of them have tried Whitetail Institute products and other products as well, and they always realize quickly that Whitetail Institute products are by far superior.

Whitetail Institute has made a customer for life from me and my family. My wife was able to take her first deer last year on one of the Whitetail Institute plots, an impressive 11-point mature buck (photo 1), and this year I was able to take a first in my hunting career, a mature, full velvet 8 pointer off the same plot!! That's two mature bucks in two

years, off the same plot! This spring we will be installing a much larger plot, and it will be planted in Whitetail Institute products. Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for being a company that sportsmen can trust. With so many gimmicks out there that prey on hard working hunters, it's nice to see a company that we sportsmen can trust to do what they say.

Donald Williams - Kentucky



Last spring, I bought my first Whitetail Institute products, Imperial Whitetail Clover and Chic Magnet. New to the food plot scene, I wasn't sure if there was a science to how to plant it all, so I put the clover in a large 2-1/2 acre plot and the Chic Magnet on the back hill.

Two years ago, I built my hunting blind in a nearby creek bordering my property because 95 percent of all my deer traffic was going through the creek bottom on my 15-acre property, the other 5 percent was going on the other side of the creek. Challenges grew faster than the clover and chicory for it had been several months since we Kansans had seen rain, and little did I know it would be several months before the rains would come again. I was afraid that with the lack of rain we were getting, spraying a herbicide to control the weeds that were growing so bountifully, would actually hurt the young investment that I had planted. Afraid of losing the plot, I mowed the weeds. It looked as if I had just wasted a large investment and another year. Stress and frustration was short lived however, as by August the rain did come and boy did it come. Before I knew it, Imperial Whitetail Clover was everywhere, and the Chic Magnet was flourishing! Hunting from my blind in the creek came to a standstill because the deer bypassed the creek and went straight for the plot. Mid-season I made a desperate move and put up another stand outside the creek closer to where the deer were now traveling in order to land a shot at a buck. Sure enough. I ended up shooting a mature buck... my biggest ever! Wow! What a great end to the hunting season. Here it is mid-January and since using the Imperial Whitetail Clover and Chic Magnet, 90 percent of all deer traffic goes through the food plot and only about 5 percent goes through the creek leaving only about 5 percent of the deer traffic on the back side. Looks like a huge win on my part thanks to Whitetail Institute products! Looking forward to many years of good hunting! Can't wait for year two!

Dallas Boese - Kansas



I have used Imperial Whitetail Clover and Winter-Greens and have had great results. I have gone from harvesting one or two deer a year to four or five. Enclosed is a picture of 14 does in my Winter-Greens plot. The other picture is a buck I shot this year coming off my clover plot. Love the products. Just bought Alfa-Rack Plus to try this spring. Thanks Whitetail Institute.

Justin Rayburn - New York



Since planting Whitetail Institute products on our 40 and 65 acre tracts of land, we have held more deer on the property. We've planted many Whitetail Institute products including Imperial Whitetail Clover, Chic Magnet and Winter-Greens. We often have many winter pictures in our Winter-Greens plot even after numerous snow falls. I have counted up to 12 deer feeding in an 1/2 acre Imperial Whitetail Clover plot all at the same time. On opening weekend a few years ago, my cousin Don Stohr killed the great buck in photo 1 as it followed a doe into a Winter-Greens plot. I killed the monster split G2 buck in photo 2 that same weekend near a Winter-Greens plot. He was the biggest buck I had ever killed. Two other hunters with us killed great bucks that weekend as well. Thank you, Whitetail Institute.

Jeff McMillin - Wisconsin



Here is a photo showing a few examples of what Whitetail Institute products have done for us. We use Imperial Whitetail Clover, Fusion, Beets & Greens and Whitetail Oats Plus. We are seeing more deer and killing bigger bucks. Our biggest buck so far scored 179 inches and we're looking forward to having more fun and killing even bigger bucks. We use the best and we are getting the best results. Not really much more to say. Thanks Whitetail Institute.

Bill Boeschen - Illinois

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 three to four 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: Field Tester Response
239 Whitetail Trail, Pintala, AL 36043**



To Everything There is a Season:

Understanding the Changing Nutritional Needs of Deer

By **Matt Harper**

Photos by the Author

Mature bucks are one of the most vulnerable to the harshness of winter which is why nutrition is so important.

My afternoon snack in junior high school included three bologna sandwiches, a big bag of chips and two — sometimes three — Mountain Dews.

That cornucopia of goodness didn't replace supper but was merely a between-meal survival snack. Amazingly, I didn't weigh 300 pounds but was rather sturdy at 5 feet, 10 inches and 150 pounds. Age contributed to that metabolism phenomenon, but it's important to note that I typically snacked after sports practice. Further, after the last chip and gulp of soda went down my gullet, I tackled whatever Dad wanted me to do on the farm, which typically involved manual labor he didn't want to do.

Fast forward 34 years. If I even smell a pizza, I gain at least 2 pounds. Even salads aren't a safe bet, at least if they contain anything good, such as meat, eggs, cheese or dressing.

Food and nutrient intake are also top concerns for whitetail deer, but not necessarily for the reasons that apply to humans. Deer have a constant intake-versus-activity balance that plays out daily. They must consume enough nutrients to maintain their physical ability to reproduce, avoid predation and withstand adverse environmental conditions. Further, deer need varying levels of nutrients depending on

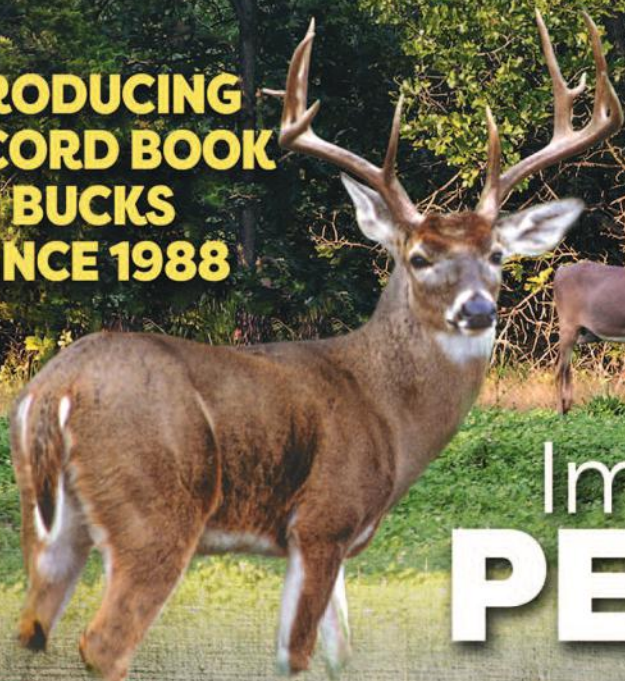
their stage in the growth cycle and the time of year that coincides with a specific biological or physiological function. For example, the nutrient needs of a fawn differ from those of a yearling, and the yearling's needs differ from those of an adult deer. But nutritional needs are also influenced by breeding, gestation, lactation and antler growth. To maximize a deer's nutritional management, you should consider it from a 365-day perspective and match supplementation to the phase within the annual cycle of the deer herd.

Growth

Before delving into how nutritional requirements change based on yearly cycles, it's important to understand the role nutrition plays in the growth stages of deer. Fawns are the most rapidly growing age class based on skeletal gain versus body weight. A young fawn needs to grow and gain strength quickly to avoid predation. Fawns require extremely nutrient-dense milk to support that rapid growth.

Doe milk is substantially higher in fat and protein than cow milk, and it's also higher in minerals such as calcium and magnesium. Although we can't directly manage a fawn, we can manage the machine that produces that nutrient-rich diet. Making sure a doe has adequate nutrients in her diet, such as protein, minerals and vitamins, ensures she can produce maximum quantities of milk for her fawn(s). In fact, nutrient management for the doe herd is extremely important in lactation and during gestation.

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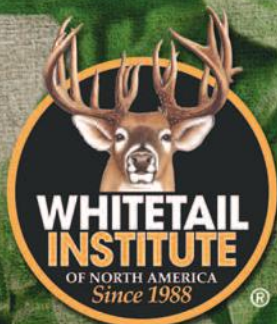


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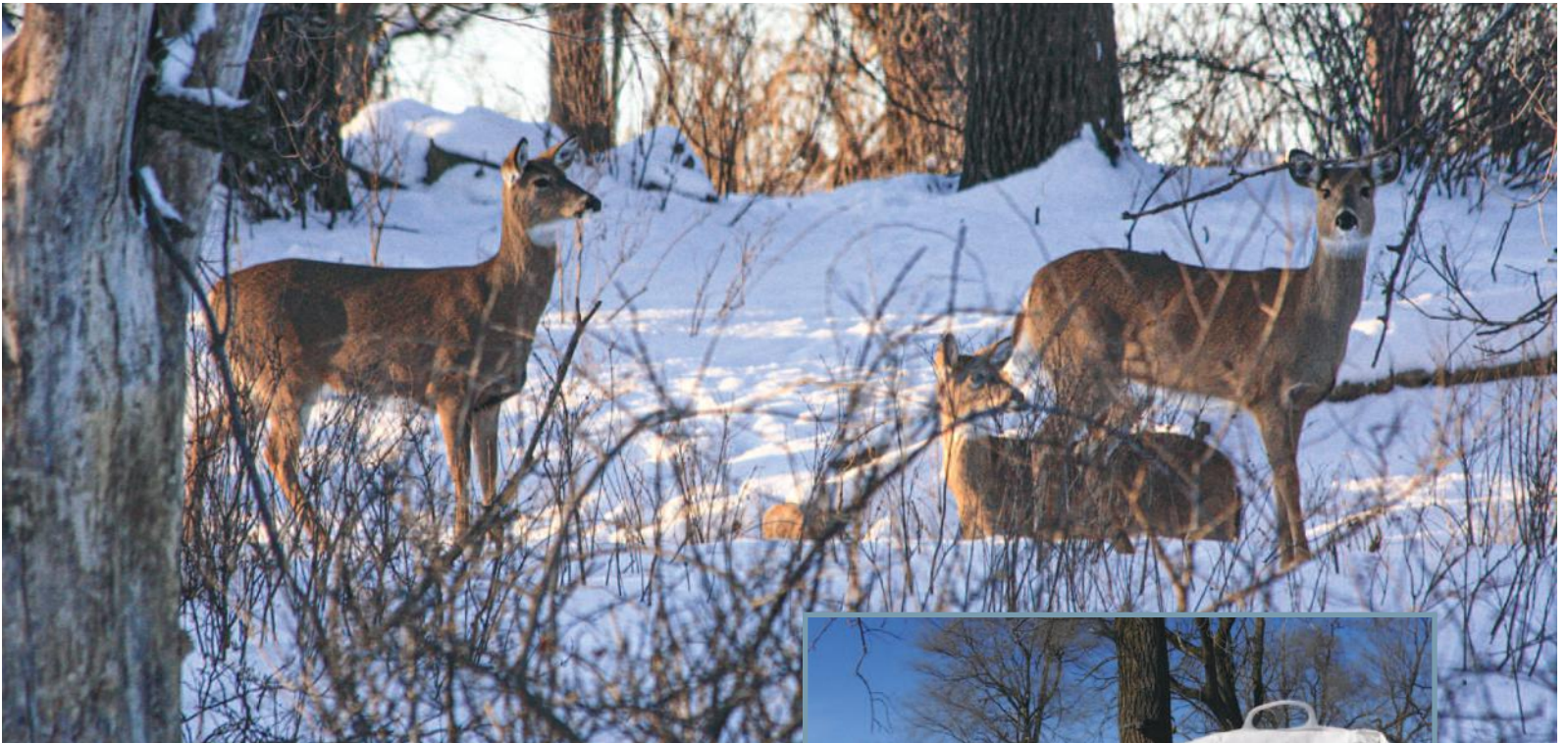
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Does in late winter and early spring need proper nutrition not only to maintain their bodies but also for prenatal fawns.

Proper nutrition for a pregnant doe typically results in a higher birth weight, and a stronger and, ultimately, a healthier fawn. Fawns born at lighter body weights have a far greater mortality rate during the first few days of life. Fawns begin eating foods other than milk at a relatively young age. In just a few weeks, you might see them standing next to their mother, picking at a clover leaf or visiting a supplemental mineral site. My trail camera photos in spring and summer often show fawns with their noses buried deep in a mineral site. That additional mineral supplementation can help boost their growth and will likely result in a higher weaning weight.

Yearling deer are akin to me during my teenage years. They don't eat bologna and potato chips, but they put away groceries and seem to remain gangly and thin. Their nutrient demand for body growth exceeds what they can consume, so there's little left for condition or fat stores. Similarly, antler growth is secondary to body growth, health and conditioning, which, combined with the fact that those deer are young, results in many unimpressive racks. But although a yearling buck might not make you shake in your stand, things occurring in its young body are laying the foundation for a future wall-hanger.

From the time of birth to about 3-1/2 years old, bucks grow their skeletal system. Because a genetically maximized skeleton is critical for optimal antler growth at maturity, the nutritional plane of a buck during its first three years can affect its antler growing potential. Bucks will reach full muscle growth maturity at 4-1/2, so until that point, protein, minerals, vitamins and energy are used first to produce muscle. That's why we see dramatic increases in antler growth at 3-1/2 and 4-1/2, when a buck's body can direct more nutrients toward antler growth, with the maturation of the skeletal system and then muscle development, respectively. A buck cannot realize its full antler growth potential until 5-1/2, when body growth has essentially stopped and, aside from maintenance, nutrients can be fully used for



Designed specifically for the cooler months, Thrive can help deer during the critical time frame of fall through late winter

antler growth.

Similarly, young does also develop muscle and skeletal systems, although they will reach maturity up to a year earlier than bucks. The result of a doe reaching maturity is not as obvious because they produce no antlers as evidence. The nutritional plane of does from birth to maturity also affects their productivity as adults, but again, that's more difficult to ascertain. Rather than antlers, successful fawn rearing is the marker which measures nutritional health during a doe's developmental years. Lactation requires high levels of protein, minerals, vitamins and other nutrients. A well-developed skeletal system is one key to maximum milk production. Also, the muscle development of a young doe will lead to a stronger body at maturity, which improves the doe's ability to better withstand fawn rearing. A doe that receives good nutrition during its developmental years will be more likely to produce and raise healthy, productive fawns.

In either case, nutritional demands change as deer grow, with the highest nutritional requirements starting as a fawn and slowing decreasing until maturity, when they level out in terms of growth. That doesn't mean they remain static. Although good nutrition is vital all

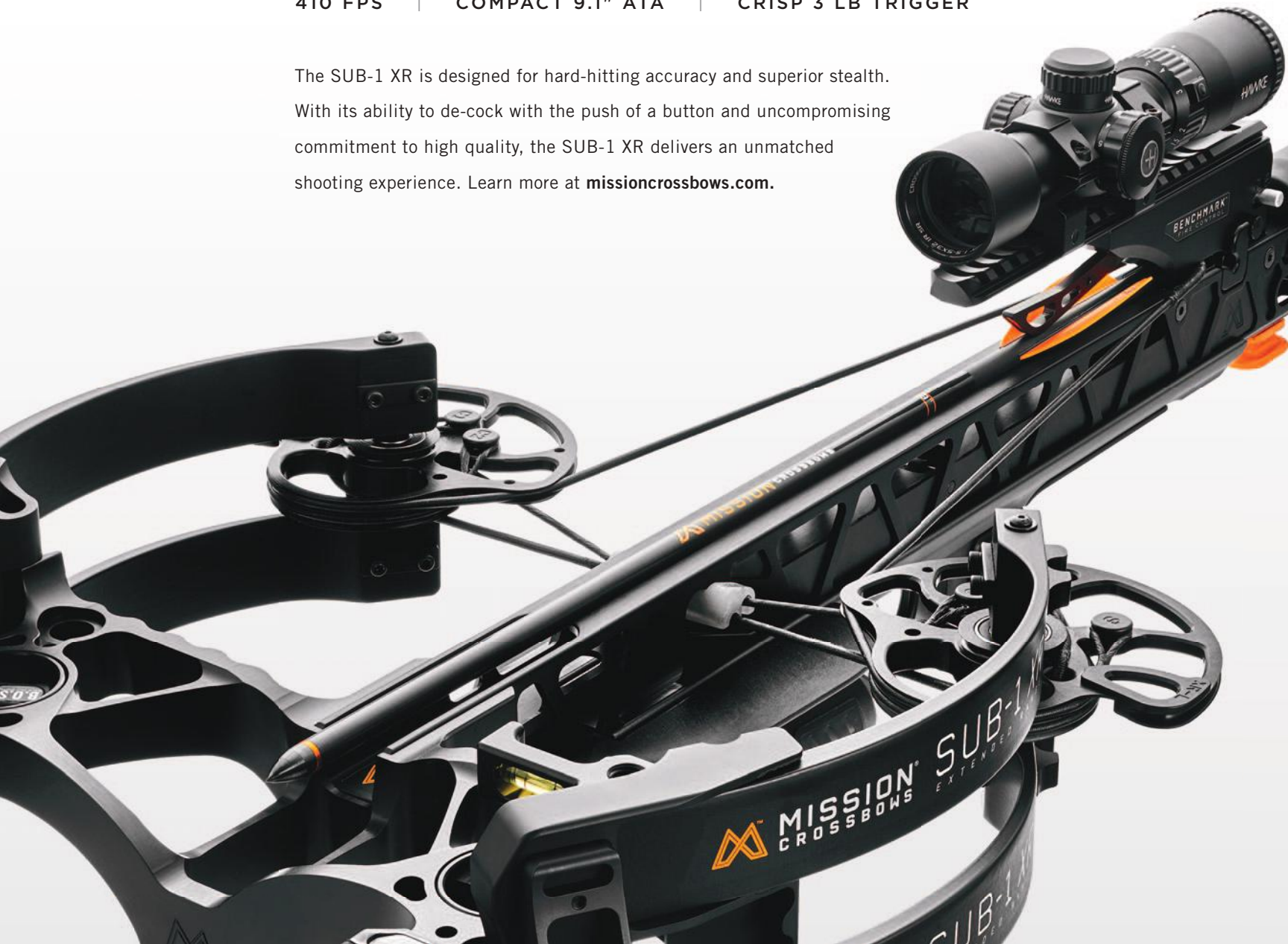


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year, requirements change depending on the time of year.

Spring and Summer

God's creation is a marvel. Why do you think most animals that rely on vegetation have their young in spring? That's when nutrition is most abundant. Young vegetative plants are at their highest levels of nutrient content and are also far more digestible, especially for small ruminants such as deer. With some geographical variation, a November breeding season results in fawns being born about the middle of May to early June. As mentioned, maximum milk production is critical to fawn survival. A doe's nutrient-dense milk must be supported by a nutrient-rich diet. Protein and energy are vital for optimal lactation, which is why having a high-quality perennial food plot, such as Imperial Whitetail Clover or Fusion, is important.

Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion are high in digestible protein and are also one of the first food sources to green up in early spring, providing critical nutrients for does before fawns are born. The protein needs of lactating does are about 18 percent, and because natural food sources are often lower in protein, the extremely high protein levels in Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion will supplement protein to help meet those requirements. But minerals and vitamins are also critical for peak milk production. Doe milk is high in minerals, which is sourced by pulling minerals from the skeletal system. Minerals from the diet replenish these supplies, but if dietary mineral levels are low, the doe's health and milk production suffer.

Minerals occur naturally in soil and are used by plants for growth and, in turn, used by deer when they consume the plants. However, almost all soils are deficient in one or more minerals, and some are extremely deficient. Even when minerals are present in forages, digestibility can vary dramatically. Without proper calcium, phosphorus, magnesium and trace mineral levels in a doe's diet, the amount of milk produced by a doe will decrease. Studies have shown that with a nutritive-deficient diet, the nutrient concentration in milk stays the same, but less total volume of milk is produced. In other words, the protein and mineral levels might be the same regardless of diet, but the fawn will receive less milk.

With less milk, fawns become weak and are far more susceptible to predation, disease and mortality. Supplementing with free-choice minerals such as 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein is extremely important in spring and summer. These products provide macro and trace minerals, and vitamins A, D and E, which help support milk production. Mineral supplementation has been proven to increase milk production for most herbivores, including deer. Increased milk production means faster-growing fawns with heavier wean weights, which promotes higher mature weights and more productive mature deer.

The effects of supplementation on the buck herd is more phenotypical, as outward results are easier to recognize. Improved nutrition results in higher body weights, better conditioning and increased antler growth. Mature bucks use nutrients first for body maintenance and then for antler growth. Basically, when more nutrients are available, bucks can use more of them for secondary characteristics, such as antler growth. Spring and summer encompass most of the antler-growing process. Like a lactating doe, a buck requires the highest levels of protein and minerals during that time. For protein, that equates to a 16 to 18 percent average of the total diet.

The velvet-growing antler is comprised of a protein matrix that essentially is like the framework of a house. Minerals are deposited on



The first year of life is extremely critical for deer and nutrition obviously plays a big role.

the protein framework, providing hardness and density. This process happens throughout the antler-growing cycle but intensifies in late summer. The minerals used for antler growth are pulled from the skeletal system and transported via the blood stream to the growing antler, much like mineral transport for milk production. Mineral in the diet is then used to replenish the skeletal system.

Because antlers are a secondary sex characteristic, bucks will not jeopardize physical health to transport excess minerals to the antler. If dietary mineral is in short supply, less mineral will be used for antler growth. As mentioned, almost all soils are deficient in one or more minerals, which is why mineral supplementation can produce dramatic results. Providing premium mineral nutrition to bucks can lead to a heavier, denser antler structure and, ultimately, bigger antlers. Also, proper mineral nutrition will result in heavier body weights, as minerals are involved in many parts of metabolism.

Fall and Winter

When summer shifts to fall, and fawns are weaned and bucks shed their velvet, protein and mineral requirements begin to decrease. However, that doesn't mean nutritional supplementation doesn't play a role in deer herd management. It simply means the supplement needs to change to meet the nutritional requirements specific to fall and winter.

In late autumn, the rut takes center stage. Bucks are in constant motion, seeking, chasing, fighting and breeding. A buck's food intake will decrease during the rut, as he has more pressing matters on his mind. The result of increased activity combined with lower nutrient intake results in a massive loss of body weight for most mature breeding bucks. The doe side of the equation is often not considered, however. Successful breeding can be affected by the body condition of a doe, meaning a doe in poor condition is less likely to become pregnant. For bucks and does, minerals, vitamins and protein remain important

in fall and winter, but energy typically becomes the most limiting portion of their diet.

As the rut fades and fall slides into winter, energy becomes increasingly important. Bucks must regain lost body weight before the worst of winter hits, which requires protein, minerals, vitamins and a lot of energy. When winter takes its full grip on the environment, many natural food sources begin to disappear, and those that remain are of lower quality. Cold weather, snow and the need to move to find food require a nutrient-rich diet to maintain body condition.


It's a simple matter of calories burned versus calories (energy) and other nutrients gained. Does are trying to maintain body condition and also need nutrition to support the growing fawns inside them. If a doe is in poor condition through the first two trimesters, she will often absorb or abort one or more fawns. During the final trimester, when most fetal growth occurs, a doe in poor condition might abort her fawns. But often, fetal demands receive most of the nutrients she consumes, which leads to an even sharper decrease in her body condition. If she remains in that state through birth, she will likely lose her fawn or fawns because her body cannot produce adequate milk, or the fawns will be born at a low birth weight.

The highest winter losses in a deer herd tend to be fawns and mature bucks. It's little wonder mature bucks rank as high as they do in that category. Bucks can lose 25 percent or more of their weight during the rut. After the rut, their focus is to regain as much weight as possible. If they do not, they can succumb to the harshness of winter. If they make it through the toughest part of winter but are in poor condition, they must first regain body condition when late winter/early spring arrive before nutrients can be used for early antler growth. Antler growth begins in late winter/early spring, and even at that stage requires quality nutrition for maximum growth. If spring green-up hasn't occurred during that period — and it likely hasn't in many parts of the country — bucks have few, if any, quality food sources, which results in stunted early antler growth. Regardless of spring and summer nutritional abundance later on, this early deficiency will lead to decreased antler size in fall.

To account for the nutritional stresses that occur in fall and winter, it's a good management practice to use a high-quality nutritional supplement. However, as mentioned, a fall and winter supplement should be formulated differently than a spring and summer supplement. 30-06 Thrive is developed specifically for the nutritional demands of fall and winter. It contains the needed levels of protein, minerals and vitamins but is also packed with highly digestible energy, making it an ideal supplement for the colder months.

If you have available acreage, it's also a great idea to have high-quality late-season food plots available. Winter-Greens, Tall Tine Tubers, Beets & Greens, Destination and Ravish are all excellent choices for producing lots of late-season forage.

Conclusion

Often, we only think about deer nutrition during certain periods. We plant plots in spring and maybe before hunting season, and we might put out some mineral. However, deer require good nutrition 365 days a year. Any gap in the plan can affect success for the year. But what deer need throughout the year changes, and to maximize your herd's potential, you should manage and use products that meet those needs. 



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There are lots of deer attractants on the market and some work better than others. If you've been wishing for an attractant that has proven time and again under real-world conditions that deer simply can't resist it, your wait is over. The Whitetail Institute is pleased to announce the availability of its new and improved Apple Obsession deer attractant just in time for deer season.

To say that Apple Obsession is simply a "deer attractant" really doesn't do it justice because it might suggest that it's like other deer attractants on the market. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Apple Obsession has been carefully crafted through exhaustive testing on wild deer across the country to be what could legitimately be called a super-attractant.

Apple Obsession is absolutely irresistible to deer. During Whitetail Institute testing, deer routinely walked past other attractants, went straight to Apple Obsession, and remained at the site for extended periods of time even in parts of the country where apples aren't grown. Apple Obsession owes its attractiveness to its specific blend of grain



lasses, salt, and other natural and artificial flavors, which enhance the product's scent and flavor appeal to deer. Apple Obsession is also formulated with 10 percent protein and with high levels of energy that are so important for deer health during the strenuous fall and winter seasons.

Available in 5-pound bags, Apple Obsession is designed to be as versatile as it is attractive. Apple Obsession can be used by itself on the ground or added to feed in trough feeders to dramatically improve feed consumption. When using Apple Obsession with feed in gravity-type feeders, mix Apple Obsession thoroughly with the feed to avoid clogging.

There are many reasons why Whitetail Institute has continually led the industry for over 30 years, and why its products are still the gold standard for deer hunters and managers.

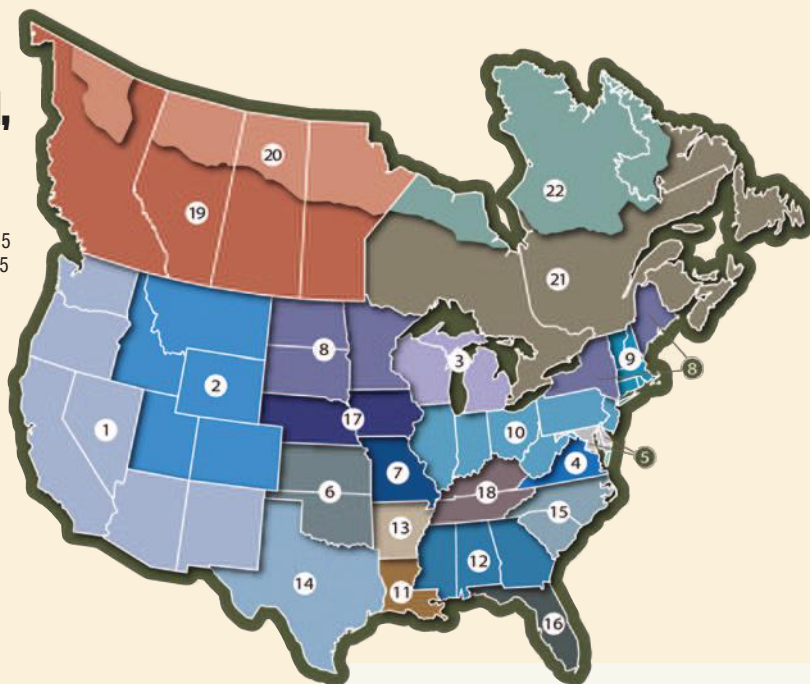
One of the most important is that the Whitetail Institute is not content to rest on its successes. Instead, the Whitetail Institute remains absolutely committed to providing the best products available and continually improving them whenever it discovers a way to do so. Give the new and improved Apple Obsession a try, and you'll see that it's yet another example of that commitment in action. 🍏

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- 1 Call for planting dates
- 2 Apr 1 - July 1
- 3 Apr 15 - June 15
Aug 1 - Sept 1
- 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
- 5 Feb 1 - Apr 1
Aug 1 - Sept 30
- 6 Feb 1 - Apr 15
Sept 1 - Nov 1
- 7 North: Mar 15 - May 1
Aug 1 - Sept 15
South: Mar 1 - Apr 15
Aug 15 - Oct 15
- 8 Apr 1 - June 15
July 15 - Sept 5
- 9 Apr 1 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15
- 10 Mar 20 - May 15
Aug 1 - Sept 15
- 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15
- 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

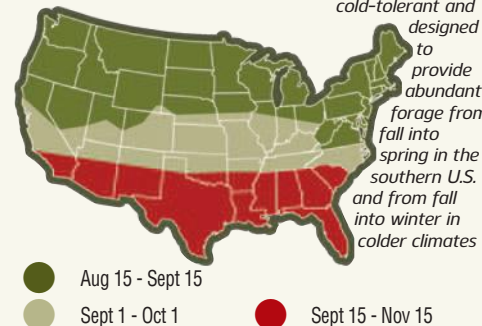


PLANTING DATES FOR VISION, PURE ATTRACTION, SECRET SPOT, WINTER PEAS, BOWSTAND, AMBUSH AND DESTINATION

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

PLANTING DATES FOR WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

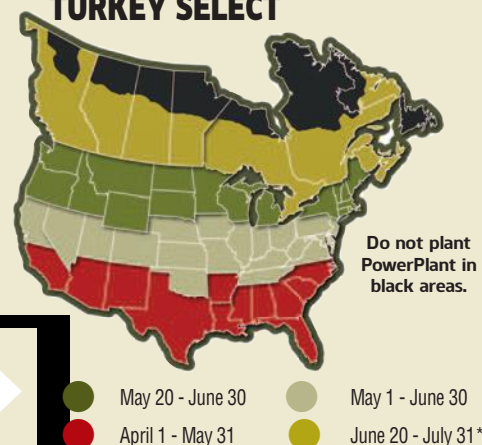
Use the map below as a guideline for when to plant Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus in your area. For best results, wait to plant until excessively hot, droughty summer weather has passed. Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus is highly cold-tolerant and designed to provide abundant forage from fall into spring in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



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

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

PLANTING DATES FOR POWERPLANT, CONCEAL AND TURKEY SELECT



*Do not plant PowerPlant, Conceal or Sunn Hemp until soil temperatures reach a constant 65 degrees F.

Last-Minute Food Plots

*Make your deer season better
with these down-to-the-wire tips.*

By Darron McDougal



*Logging roads are excellent planting locations. Not only are they easy to plant,
but deer are typically already using them as thoroughfares.*

Food, whether natural or cultivated, is irrefutably a critical ingredient for properties that consistently produce opportunities to harvest mature deer. Of course, creating food sources requires planning, know-how, equipment and hard work, but it's worth it for the payoff when fall arrives.

Even with the best intentions, though, life can get busy, and planting season can catch us with limited time to get things done. Or perhaps you acquired a lease or signed the closing papers late in the game. Maybe the property doesn't have existing fields or clearings. Planting seems out of reach. Or is it?

Several easy, inexpensive ways can make your season better, even at the last minute. It will be too late to plant a 10-acre cornfield, but you can still cultivate purposeful food sources that will attract deer to critical spots on your property.

In this article, we'll discuss three game-changing products and some practical tips for using them. Then you'll know what you can do at the last minute to improve your deer season.

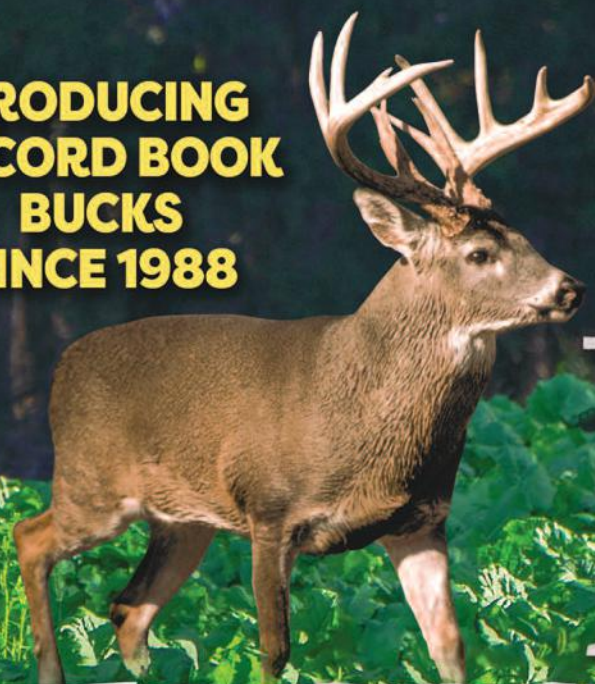
The Products

Whitetail Institute has long been simplifying food-plotting duties. It does the finest job of offering application-specific products, and then takes things farther by informing folks how to correctly use those products to maximize results. Visit whitetailinstitute.com to see what I mean.

In this article, we'll focus on three Whitetail Institute products geared for last-minute plantings.

Secret Spot is an annual seed blend with fall and winter forages tailored for small forest openings. Four pounds plants up to 4,500 square

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RECORD BOOK
BUCKS
SINCE 1988**



Imperial Whitetail ANNUALS



MAXIMUM Attraction and Production

*Right When You
and Your Deer Want It
and Need It!*



Whether you're looking for high-protein tonnage for spring and summer antler growth, attraction and energy for fall and winter, or sustained production through the coldest months of the year, the Whitetail Institute has annual food plot products specifically designed to meet your needs.

Includes seeds only available in Whitetail Institute products.



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feet. A blend of around a dozen species of plants, it provides maximum attraction throughout hunting season, and a pH booster helps improve the plot's performance. Minimal preparation is required. Simply ensure seed-to-soil contact, spread some fertilizer and let Secret Spot do the rest.

Imperial No-Plow, another annual offered by Whitetail Institute, is ideal for 1/2 acre and larger clearings that are inaccessible to large implements because it also requires minimal soil preparation. (Tip: No-Plow also does great on fully prepared plots.) It consists of multiple forages, including clovers, brassicas, radishes and others, providing up to nine months of deer-attracting power. No-Plow can flourish where other seed blends fail because of its versatile and hardy seed varieties. It's perfect for last-minute planting, as it germinates quickly and creates a plot deer can't resist.

BowStand is another blend to seriously consider. When bowhunt-

ing deer, our goal is to orchestrate ethical, close-range shooting opportunities. BowStand is tailored for this. You know those small, remote openings you can't reach by tractor? Those are spots big bucks frequent because of low human presence and ample security cover. Take a rake and a bag of BowStand, create seed-to-soil contact, spread some fertilizer, and the blend of irresistible plants will take off and pull deer in where you can easily put an arrow through their lungs. BowStand starts attracting deer immediately and will continue to do so even as the browsing intensifies.

Steve Scott, Senior Advisor of the Whitetail Institute, offered a few application suggestions regarding these blends.

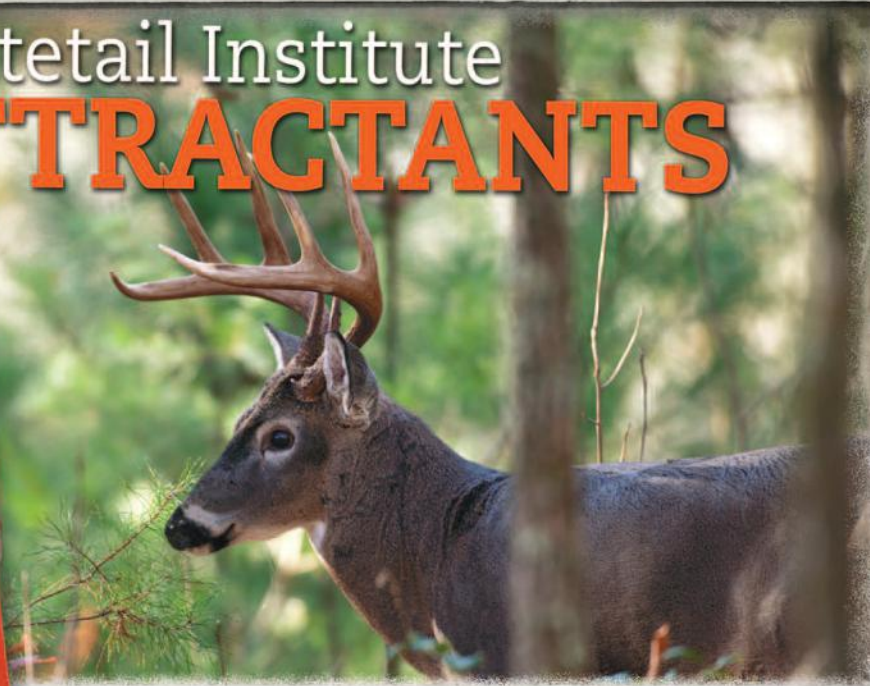
"If I were planting 1/4 acre or less," he said, "I'd lean toward Secret Spot or BowStand. For areas 1/4-1/2 acre, I'd suggest Secret Spot XL or No-Plow. For plots 1/2 acre or larger, I'd recommend No-Plow. They all establish and grow quickly and are extremely attractive to



If time has gotten away on you and you believe it's too late to plant food plots, you may be wrong. With the basic equipment pictured here, you can make your season better with increased deer sightings.

Draw 'Em In and Hold 'Em with...

Whitetail Institute **ATTRACTANTS**



Whitetail Institute started it all in 1988 and nobody knows deer nutrition and what attracts deer like the Whitetail Institute. That is why we developed our complete line of block and granular attractants to appeal to a deer's sense of smell and taste. Whether it's the irresistible scent of apples or Devour, our proprietary taste and scent enhancer, our products have what it takes to attract deer to your area. These attractants work so well, they can pull deer to your property from long distances, and will also help hold deer once they have found the source of the attraction.

Use Whitetail Institute attractants to lure both bucks and does in front of your game cameras, as well as to attract and hold hot does in your area when the time is right.



CAUTION

Due to the incredible attraction power of these products you will need to check your local game laws before hunting over the site.



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deer. The package sizes and coverage for each blend are respective with my recommendations. Whichever product you choose make sure you clear the area enough to expose the soil to allow good seed-to-soil contact.”

The Locations

It’s understood that creating large, multiple-acre fields and clearings requires equipment, ample planning and hard work. And although large food sources can be dynamite and suck deer in from long distances, they’re usually out of the question late in the game. Your best bet is to design smaller plots that require minimal ground preparation (more on that later), and use Whitetail Institute’s easy-to-grow seed blends. Scott mentioned some metrics hunters should use to determine what constitutes a good location, and a few locations he recommends.

“These three seed blends require a minimum of three to four hours of broken or direct sunlight per day,” Scott said. “Remember that as autumn progresses, the leaf drop will allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor. Any type of site that gets that bare minimum of sun exposure will allow these products to work. Ideal spots are old home sites, fire lanes, logging roads, log-landing areas, rims of pond dams (be mindful of erosion) or really any small opening that allows sufficient sun exposure.”

The types of areas Scott suggested often occur in locations that encourage daylight visits from deer. In other words, they can create awesome stand sites. Think of locations that are closer to bedding areas than large destination food sources often are.

As Scott mentioned, don’t overlook old logging roads. Deer are like humans in that they often travel paths of least resistance, especially when they connect a destination food source and a bedding area. Deer will use logging roads more when those paths feature tasty forages. The plus is that logging roads are generally one of the easiest locations to prepare for planting. And because deer often use logging roads as thoroughfares, the paths make great ambush sites for a top-pin, broadside archery shot. Further, playing the wind is easy, and accessing and exiting such stand locations creates minimal impact because you’re far from bedding areas and destination food sources.

The Procedures

Now that you know which products and locations are ideal for last-minute planting, let’s get down to the complex part: preparing the soil and planting. Actually, it’s so simple it’ll surprise you.

“If I were caught in a situation where I needed to put in a plot at the last minute, I’d acquire some piece of equipment to help me do it,” Scott said. “Whether it’s a hand tool or an ATV with some type of basic disc, I’d go in and break up and expose the soil with that tool. If there’s enough time to do so and there are abundant existing weeds and grasses, I’d suggest first spraying a herbicide product over the area to kill off existing plants. Once everything dies off, raking everything away to expose the soil will be far easier.”

Next, you should spread some fertilizer before planting.

“I recommend following the detailed directions listed on the bag of whichever Whitetail Institute product the consumer chooses,” Scott said. “These instructions and more informative materials are also available at whitetailinstitute.com. You’ll get solid information on how to prepare your location, plant the product correctly and then you can

reap the benefits when hunting season arrives. The instructions are incredibly user-friendly, and the results are outstanding.”

No Implements? No Problem

Hunters often misconceive that planting attractive food plots requires big equipment — the minimum being an ATV with a disc. Although bigger equipment reduces the manual labor, many blue-collar folks cannot afford to own, maintain and store them. It’s a dilemma that keeps many hunters from improving their land with food plots. This is where Whitetail Institute’s No-Plow, Secret Spot and Bow-Stand shine.

“These products can be planted with minimal effort,” Scott said. “Obviously the bigger equipment you can use the easier the job will be, but a tool as basic as a garden rake can be used to expose the soil. Then, you can broadcast fertilizer and seed with an inexpensive hand-held spreader.”

There you have it. ATVs or large implements are not required to put in an effective food plot. It’s inexpensive and practical for anyone willing to invest some effort with basic hand tools.

Credit Roll

Now that we’ve discussed the products, locations and procedures for creating effective last-minute food plots, get busy, and redeem lost time before deer season opens. Too many hunters overcomplicate things when they’re actually simple. Take the leap, and plant one of the Whitetail Institute products mentioned, and you’ll get far better results — despite your lost time — than if you plant nothing. The extra effort will bolster your property’s deer necessities, which will facilitate greater deer traffic. It could also be the ticket that puts a mature buck broadside at 20 yards this fall.

Scott agreed. “If you find yourself at the last minute and haven’t planted anything, don’t panic,” he said. “There’s good news. Whitetail Institute has a very effective way to solve the problem. It’s inexpensive, easy to do, and it works if you’re willing to put in the work that’s required.” 🦌

***You don’t have to have large implements.
You can create a beautiful kill plot by
exposing the soil with a cheap garden rake
and some hard work.***



Photo by Darren McDougal

Antler Building SUPPLEMENTS

from The Whitetail Institute

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.

Caution: Because 30-06 products are so attractive to deer, some states consider them bait. Check your local game laws before using or hunting over 30-06.

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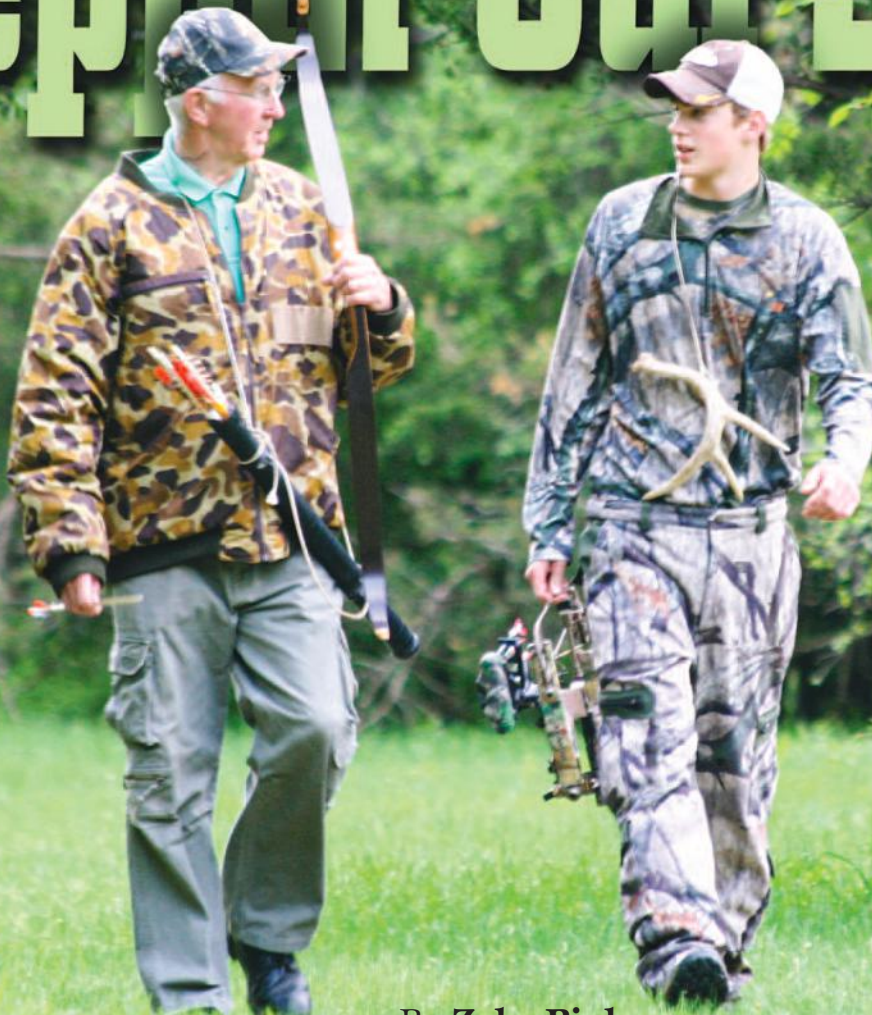


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Reppin' Our Sport



By Zeke Pipher

Photos by the Author

I was the only man in the group. I was the only one from rural America. And I was the only one who hunted. Three minutes into the week-long Nebraska Writers Workshop, I knew representing my values as a sportsman would be a challenge. As I took a seat in that University of Nebraska-Lincoln classroom, I settled into the reality that for the next five days, I was going to be the odd man out.

These women would have to hear about hunting all week. I signed up for the workshop to improve my outdoor writing, and most of my articles deal with deer hunting. The way this class was structured required each person to bring a new article or story each day to read to the group. Each participant was encouraged to interact with each other, primarily offering advice and suggestions pertaining to writing style. We would learn how to write better from one another, so most of the feedback addressed issues such as voice, mood and grammatical style.

Most, but not all.

On the second day, when I read a personal essay about teaching my children how to field-dress and process deer to enjoy the entire field-to-table experience, I ignited a powder keg of personal remarks. As I finished reading, hands flew up in the air throughout the room. They asked about my conscience. They asked me how I could pull the trigger and take the life of such a beautiful creature. They even asked personal questions about my parenting. For example, one lady asked, "Aren't you worried that teaching your kids to enjoy bloodshed might

desensitize them? They might enjoy hurting people when they grow up.”

Yup. That was an actual statement one participant made that day, and during the week, I received dozens of comments expressing the same or similar sentiment.

A Common Curiosity

Unless you live under a rock, you’ve had your participation in deer hunting challenged. As an outdoor writer, I’ve received dozens of emails through the years from anti-hunters wanting to voice their opinions. Several of my hunting buddies have been politely challenged or viciously attacked because they hunt. I recently mentioned to a friend that I was working on this article and asked if he’d ever encountered rudeness from an anti-hunter. He chuckled. “Well, sort of,” he said. “Someone in a Prius flipped me off once when I was checking in a deer at a gas station.”

Non-hunters outnumber hunters in America. The percentages are bleak. In our country, for every person who puts on camo and heads to the field to fill his or her freezer, over 20 people will stick to their street clothes and buy meat that’s packaged in a store. Sadly, those stats are moving in the wrong direction. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, hunting license sales have decreased from about 17 million in the early 1980s to 15 million. Our numbers have leveled off somewhat the past few years but our sport is constantly under attack, which places a tremendous responsibility on the shoulders of those of us who hunt. We must represent and represent well.

I realize some hunters will disagree with me, perhaps saying something like, “Forget ’em. Why should we care what they think?” Some might even suggest that we return the middle finger with the middle finger, but that attitude only hurts our cause and feeds the negative stereotypes that continue to plague our sport. One of the women in the writer’s workshop told me after class one day, “I’ve never liked hunting, but it’s not so much the killing animals that I have a problem with, but rather the few hunters I’ve known. They would drive around town with a dead deer in the back of their truck, tailgate down, just to make us mad.”

It seems that how non-hunters think of hunters will have a great bearing on the future of our sport. Things such as our rights and privileges as sportsmen, or how successfully we recruit new people into deer hunting, will be greatly affected by how we present our sport and ourselves today. I believe in the you-catch-more-flies-with-honey-than-you-do-with-vinegar approach to reppin’ deer hunting to non-hunters.

Scott’s Way of Reppin’

Full disclosure: I haven’t always represented our sport well. I remember a few times, in my early 20s, driving around Lincoln, Nebraska, with the tailgate down to show off the buck in the bed of my truck. I remember a moment in a college psychology class when I obnoxiously debated an anti-hunter, throwing out stats and anything else I could think of to make that fellow student feel stupid. I didn’t care about him. I cared about hunting, and I’m pretty sure that came through loud and clear. I have a handful of memories like that from my early years of deer hunting, and I’m embarrassed by them.

I needed to change, and one man, Scott, helped me catch a vision for doing a better job. Scott was and remains a uniquely successful deer hunter. He’s a biologist and a well-known outdoor speaker. As I think about Scott, three specific qualities come to mind that help paint a picture of how to represent our sport well.

Humility: Scott has shot more — and bigger — bucks than almost any other deer hunter I’ve met, but you wouldn’t know that from talking with him. He has a gentle but effective way of turning each conversation back to the person with whom he’s speaking. For example, someone might ask him a question like, “How many Boone and Crockett bucks have you shot?” And he’ll probably reply, “I’m not sure, but tell me about your best whitetail.” And with that, he has you talking.

The first time I met Scott, he was speaking at an event in Nebraska. When I went up after his talk and thanked him for coming to Nebraska, he replied, “Well, thank you for having me. What brought you here tonight, Zeke?” I shared my life’s story with him, and he seemed genuinely interested to hear the unabridged version. He has a gift of making the other person feel like the priority.

Self-respecting: I don’t mean to paint a picture of Scott that suggests he’s soft or pandering. Far from it. This might sound odd, but Scott is masculine to the core. I’ve always believed you can tell a lot about a person by their handshake, and Scott’s gives him away. It’s not wimpy or limp-wristed, but it doesn’t crush your hand in some selfish attempt to prove its strength. And for what it’s worth, Scott could crush your hand. He’s a big guy with meaty paws, but his presence makes people feel safe and at ease, never threatened or on edge.

The way Scott represents deer hunting is similar to his handshake. He’s slow to speak, but when he does, you can tell that he respects himself and his choice to hunt. He doesn’t apologize for what he believes. He doesn’t try to soften the rough edges of a sport that takes the lives of other creatures. He’s able to acknowledge some of the difficult aspects of our bloodsport, yet in a way that demonstrates his



Aidan Pipher, Zeke’s son, with a large whitetail he shot two years ago with his crossbow.



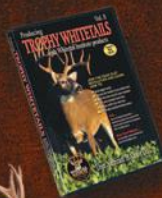
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convictions that hunting is ethical and should be respected as a valid way to practice conservation and provide food for our families or those in need.

Preparedness: Along with his humility and self-respect, Scott also displays intelligence and preparedness for conversations with non-hunters. I've heard Scott speak a few times and watched him field questions not unlike the ones I received at the writer's workshop. Scott always began his response with, "I appreciate that question," or "That's a really good question, thank you for asking." Then, after respecting the humanity of the other person, he always gives concrete, intelligent responses that draw from various disciplines, such as conservation, ethics, social sciences and personal experiences.

For example, at a natural resources conference several years ago, a non-hunter made the statement, "Hunting is dying out, and it's a good thing. Kids shouldn't learn to kill things."

Scott replied by referencing how the bonds between young men and women and the natural world are breaking at an alarming pace today. He discussed how a child's mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health is greatly improved simply by getting outside and encountering wild places in positive ways. He said, "For me as a dad, deer hunting was one way that I could pull my kids away from screens and get them into some breathtaking places."

The objector was a bit shocked by the response and ended up agreeing with Scott's entire reply. He said, "Yes, I see your point. I suppose that if hunting helps children put down their phones and video games and go outside, there's some good in it."

That's just Scott. He has a gift of being able to disarm someone. A non-hunter might come at him with both barrels loaded, but when they're done talking with him, they've forgotten they were holding guns.

I present Scott's example as one way of conducting ourselves around those who don't hunt. We'll each have our own way, driven in large part by our personalities, but the virtues that Scott displays — humility, kindness, other-centeredness and respect for those with whom we disagree — ought to be a part of our strategies to rep' our sport well.

Back to Writers Group

That writer's group turned out to be an amazing experience. Thanks to the writing-related responses of the women in the class, I believed I grew quite a bit as an outdoor writer that week. Specifically, they challenged me to add color and detail to the stories I write. They encouraged me to work harder at character development. They even threw out ideas for how to write with more emotion, helping readers identify with the ideas I'm trying to communicate. These women helped me better understand the world of words, and I'm grateful for their contributions.

What's more, thanks to the non-writing-related responses — the objections and questions about deer hunting — I got to practice many of the qualities and strategies I've witnessed in Scott. I doubt I completely turned anyone around on the subject that week. I'm guessing the odds of any of my new friends purchasing a deer tag this season are pretty low. I think, however, I've represented our sport well.

One of the women — the one who said she disliked the hunters in her hometown — came up to say goodbye on the last afternoon. We exchanged best wishes, and then she walked toward the door. Before exiting, she turned around and said, "Have a good deer season this fall."

That felt like movement. I'll take it. 

Hunting Whitetails:

So much more than killing.

By R.G. Bernier

Photos by the Author

"Hunting deer has very little to do with killing animals or hanging heads on the wall." — Gene Wensel

Have we lost sight of what is important and fun in our deer hunting quests? Have we sullied the sport because of fascinations with only the biggest bucks, record books, big buck contests and recognition? Has the impact of deer hunting television and videos unintentionally cast a false narrative upon its many viewers that only big bucks matter? Have we falsely portrayed deer hunting as a competition in which the killer of the biggest and most bucks becomes the hero, enviously admired by all those attempting to follow in those footsteps? If so — if this is where we are — it's time to revert back to all that is wildest and free.

If we are to have a future, it should not be predicated on just killing. Noted deer hunter Gene Wensel substantiated that notion when he opined, "Hunting deer has very little to do with killing animals or hanging heads on a wall. It has minimal relevance concerning numbers, measuring tapes or competition amongst ourselves. It does have a lot to do with challenge and personal satisfaction. It has to do with adventure, history, heritage and primal dreams."

The fascination with deer hunting does not lie in commercialization, TV shows, products, world records or superheroes. It isn't in camouflage or the hottest new deer scent. Those are byproducts of clever salesmanship banking on consumers believing that what manufacturers are offering is the ticket to success. They are merely the results of cultural shifts and entrepreneurs trying to make a buck rather than kill one.

So, let's look back, even for a few moments, at a time when life seemed effortless; a time filled with adventure, exploration, fascination and fun. No, I'm not talking about a vacation to Disneyland, although Walt captured all the components of a child's heart in building that fanciful empire. Actually, I am referring to those endless summer days of capturing frogs, building forts and pretending you were the Lone Ranger, riding atop the split-rail fence, pretending it was a horse and yelling, "Hi ho, Silver, away."

Those were carefree days, when the only stress came from being made to take a long overdue bath, mothers forcing us inside at dusk and wondering whether you could fight back or just eat the Brussels sprouts. And then, as we know too well, adulthood kicked in, and simplicity suddenly became complicated with a job, family, taxes, transportation, schedules and technology. The dinner-hour news voice of Walter Cronkite our parents listened to — a boring and ridiculous waste of good time to a child — suddenly made sense.

Ironically, as we grow older and hopefully wiser, we search for ways to return to the simplicity of a child; a place where decisions are minute and have no impact, where your monetary worth has no bearing, and responsibility is limited to personal care: Eat, drink and be merry. Sadly, some folks in their quest to escape reality, turn to drugs and alcohol, a temporary fix that leads to only more despair. Others

who march off day after day to mundane jobs to meet the mortgage payment, put gas in the car and put food on the table, immerse themselves in their favorite sports team, and the highs and lows of life ride on their team's success.

Truthfully, all of us are secretly searching for something that will ultimately transport our otherwise banal existence to a place and time in which we are rescued of all that has become common. After all, isn't that why tropical resorts, movie theaters and even Disneyland have been so successful?

Although we can never escape the madness that permeates the world — nor should we absolve ourselves of our responsibilities — there is a path that can rescue us and leads to brighter tomorrows.

Listen. Do you hear it? No, it's not honking horns, squealing brakes, a stereo blaring or people shouting out demands. It's not a cell phone ringing or an iPad playing tunes. It's quiet; a strange silence that leaves you initially feeling a bit out of place. But continue to listen and you will hear subtle sounds permeating from woodland inhabitants. The chirping of birds, the cackle of distant turkeys, the squawking of a squirrel and the rush of wind as it blows across the brown, lifeless leaves hanging on the limbs of a mighty oak tree.

Hunting whitetail deer means so much more than collecting a pile of deer flesh. It's far more than amassing another set of antlers for the wall, and far more gratifying than beating your chest in proclamation that you are the greatest hunter. It means far more than the endorsements, new products and developed skills.

Pursuing whitetails puts each of us on common ground where the rules are simple, and the results are determined more by random circumstance than contrived manipulation. It divorces us from reality while unleashing the primitive spirit of adventure, surprise and contentment. We gain a fresh perspective of who we are as our limitations are tested and our resolve becomes strengthened. In our pursuit of this elusive creature in the quietness of its woodland domain, we learn



The author with a nice mature whitetail.

things about ourselves that would otherwise be lost in chaos. I believe that if more people hunted deer, there would be far less need for psychiatrists and therapy. Anxiety would decline, stress would be reduced and a happy outlook would replace the negative sentiments so common in life.

Whitetail deer are much more than an animal to be preyed upon. As a means to an end, in our pursuit of them, we aspire to achieve success. Otherwise, why go? But the exercise of legitimately hunting the beast provides a therapeutic medicine unlike any to be crossing the pharmaceutical counter, regardless if you kill a deer. Show me a medication that can rival the result of an annual deer hunt. Deer hunting taps into the physical, emotional and even spiritual realm of each participant. It truly is cleansing.

Gene Hill poetically illustrated the value of hunting when he wrote: "The thing that cements the love of a man for his carpet of leaves and his ceiling of stars is the knowledge that just being involved is enough. There is no score worth keeping. All we should ever count is hours, never birds, nor length of antler, or hits or misses. If we want to do something where we can't lose, then we must accept the proposition that we cannot win. We are not involved in a contest, but a very simple and pure journey that promises each day will be different, unrepeatable and unrecapturable. Each time is unique. If there is anything of value to be entered in the log, let's leave it at a series of impressions. A day without deer is a day spent in delicious solitary thought; a day that might bring you closer to understanding the infinite mystery of it all."

The whitetail deer is more than just bone, hide and antler. It's one of nature's children that has continuously demonstrated its worthiness as a viable antagonist. When pursued, it offers the greatest diversion known to this writer. Participation doesn't have an age limit or required intensity level, and how you play depends on your hunting preference.

Wildlife photographer Mike Biggs wrote in *The Whitetail Chronicles*: "Will technology eventually create such an artificiality that it could destroy the mystique that brought us here in the first place? In extreme cases, that might be possible. Certainly, we don't want to see whitetails come to share the same status as livestock. Nobody wants to hunt a Hereford."

With the advancement of phone apps and the like, I wonder how much of that mystique is lost by some of us? For me, a tracker who hunts primarily in the wilderness, everything I learn is gained by the sign I find traversing the countryside. Every rub, scrape, track and contact with the deer is a new experience that is compared with prior interactions. As Biggs wrote: "For most of us, the real frontier of whitetail enlightenment lies in the accurate perception of their lives and times — the true understanding of how whitetails live, develop, behave and age under natural circumstances. We want the knowledge. We need the mystery."

We want to know as much as possible about the animal. That will put more deer before us than all the gimmicks that promote success. Every deer hunter wants to succeed, but deep down, we want all the qualities that will make for lasting memories beyond just a pile of dead deer flesh.

So if you're looking for a diversion — one that fulfills and restores those childhood days — here it is. Take the initial step out of modern civilization with its trappings, and place your next step into the secretive world of the whitetail deer. Go deer hunting. It's the best medicine I know to cure whatever might ail you. 🦌

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IMPERIAL "CHIC" MAGNET® YOU SAVE \$50.00



Suggested Retail: \$139.94 (9 lbs. - 3-Acre Planting)
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 Imperial "Chic" Magnet. (3–3 lb. bags)
 TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____
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Please add \$10.50 for shipping and handling for each 9 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) *Please enclose with shipping and payment information.*

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IMPERIAL WHITETAIL OATS PLUS® YOU SAVE \$13.00



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

Price with coupon: \$36.95

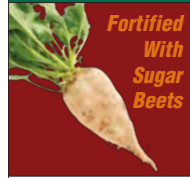
Please send _____ 45 lb. bags of Whitetail Oats Plus.

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Price with coupon: \$109.96

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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. (2-16.5 lb. bags)

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Suggested Retail: \$90.97 (60 lbs.)

Coupon Price: \$65.97

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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.

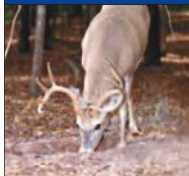
Call for larger quantities.

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Suggested Retail: \$59.96 and \$29.95

Coupon Price: \$46.96 or \$24.95

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Please add \$13.00 for shipping and handling for EACH Block or \$19.00 for EACH Double Pack. (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.

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

Coupon Price: \$65.97 or \$74.97

Please send _____ 60 lb. quantities of 30-06 (3-20 lb. bags)

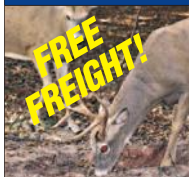
☐ Original 30-06 @ \$65.97 ☐ 30-06 Plus Protein @ \$74.97

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____
(Add 7% Sales Tax)

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.



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Please send _____ ☐ 3-Pak KRAZE @ \$29.97

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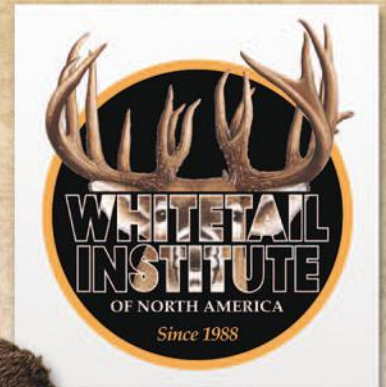
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