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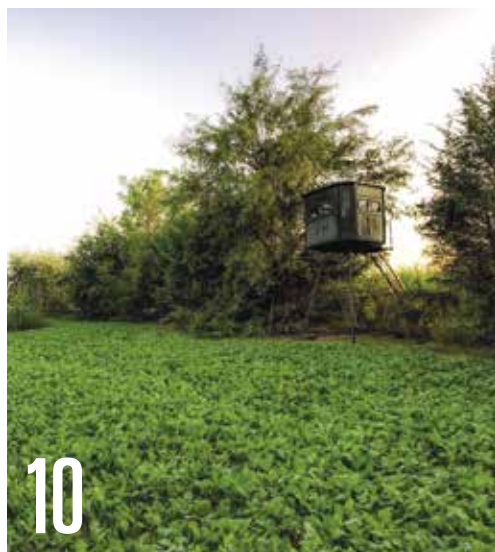
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■ William Cousins—VP/GM Whitetail Institute



HELPING LAND MANAGERS FOR 35 YEARS

2⁰²³ marks the 35th anniversary of a remarkable milestone: the birth of the North American food plot industry and the sole company responsible for it — the Whitetail Institute of North America. As I look back across those three-and-a-half decades, I'm proud to say we've continued to stay true to our founding principles and overall mission of educating and helping hunters and land managers positively affect their deer herds and become better stewards of the land they're entrusted with. It's one of the many reasons why our products and services continue to be the gold standard by which all others are measured.

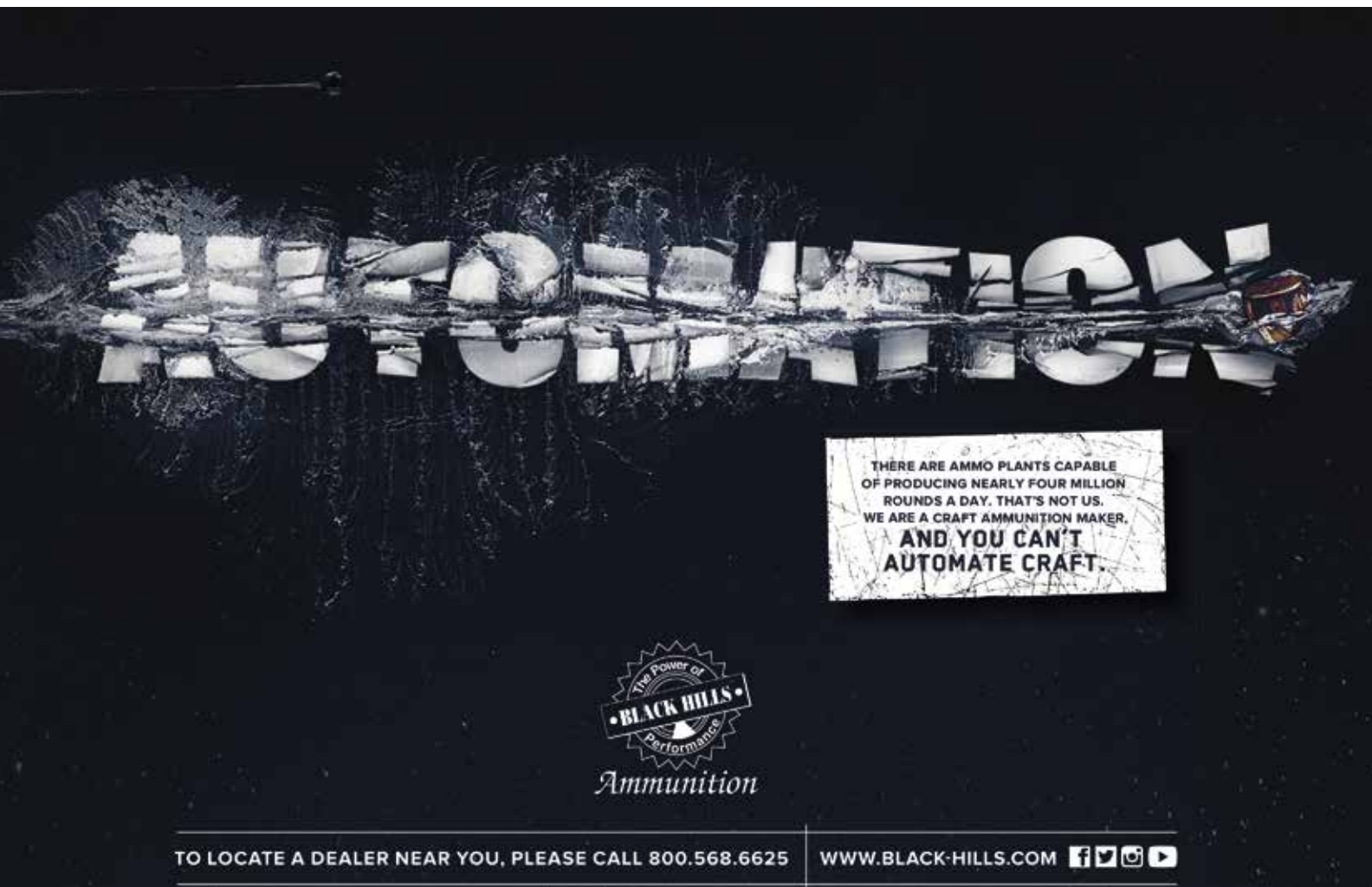
Gold for us rings even truer, because everyone here at Whitetail Institute believes in the Golden Rule — the principle of treating others the way they wish to be treated. Nowhere else in the industry will you find the same level of service and quality you've come to expect from the Whitetail Institute. If you have a question, our team is here to help with anything from soil and weeds to whitetails and seeds. I encourage you to give us a call. We've spent three-and-a-half decades perfecting the food plot industry. We understand

that knowledge is power, and we're passionate about sharing our knowledge and information so you can succeed.

Future generations depend on us to improve the quality of our land, which is why the decisions we make today and will make in the future are so important. If you're interested in an even greater level of one-on-one expert assistance, I urge you to reach out to Whitetail Institute's Next Level Consulting team. It's one of the best personalized tools available to improve your deer herd, deer hunting and land management in an educated and effective way. For more information about Whitetail Institute Next Level Consulting, contact Jody Holdbrooks at jody@whitetailinstitute.com.

Our goal is simple: provide our customers with science-based products and services that are of the highest quality, and the most extensively researched, tested and proven in the industry, along with expert advice that's just a phone call or e-mail away. Let us make our 35 years of success part of yours.

— William



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MAGNESIUM AND CALCIUM:

MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISREPRESENTED PLANT NUTRIENTS

These secondary nutrients are essential for plant growth, but some dubious claims have confused people about their actual roles in soil fertility management.

In 2022, articles in Whitetail News discussed the macronutrients essential for plant growth: nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Plants need macronutrients in large amounts.

The next group of nutrients is called secondary plant nutrients. Secondary refers to the smaller amounts needed for plant growth compared to macronutrients — not secondary importance. In this article, I'll discuss the secondary nutrients calcium and magnesium. I will admit that calcium and magnesium deficiencies in food plot forages are rare, and that's based in part on the many soil testing reports I review. However, the elements are essential for plant growth, and their actual roles in a complete soil fertility management plan need to be discussed. Further, and unfortunately, many misrepresentations about calcium and magnesium exist in the food plot industry and need to be explained.

MAGNESIUM

Magnesium is the central element in the chlorophyll molecule, meaning it has a role in photosynthesis. Additionally, magnesium serves as a catalyst for enzymes necessary for plant growth. Magnesium is a mobile element in plants,

meaning the element moves from older leaves to younger leaves as plants grow, which is why symptoms of magnesium deficiency will first develop on older leaves. Typical symptoms of magnesium deficiency are yellowing between leaf veins, leaving the leaf veins green.

The primary source of magnesium to correct deficiencies in the soil is dolomitic limestone, which is a naturally occurring blend of magnesium carbonate and calcium carbonate. Large amounts of dolomitic limestone are typically applied to correct acidic soils, and that lessens any chance for a magnesium deficiency. Other magnesium-containing fertilizers are magnesium sulfate (also called Epsom salt) and sulfate of potash magnesia (sold as K-Mag). Those alternative sources of magnesium are more costly than dolomitic limestone.

CALCIUM

The major role of calcium in crop growth is to provide structural support in cell walls. Calcium is immobile in crop plants. Therefore, symptoms of calcium deficiency will first develop in young leaves. Symptoms include distorted leaf shape, reduced leaf size and inhibited development of the



main bud. In forage crops, calcium is rarely deficient, because during most conditions, there are adequate calcium levels in the soil. However, certain crops have unique calcium requirements and need supplemental calcium beyond what's typically needed by plants. One example is the peanut. Supplemental calcium is usually provided in the form of gypsum (calcium sulfate) when peanut pods are forming. Because calcium is immobile in plants, gypsum is spread on the soil surface in proximity to developing peanut pods. The developing pods are surrounded by gypsum, and that direct contact is the only way peanut pods can access supplemental calcium. Similarly, tomato fruit development requires calcium sprays or gypsum dusted directly on the young fruit to prevent blossom end rot — a condition caused by calcium deficiency. These are unique examples and do not occur in forage crops.

Calcium for forage crops is usually provided by limestone, which includes calcium carbonate. Because limestone rates to treat acidic soils are commonly expressed in tons per acre, it's easy to see why calcium is rarely deficient in well-managed food plot soil. It might be highly unlikely, but if soil pH does not need to be corrected and calcium is deficient, gypsum (calcium sulfate) is an alternative source of supplemental calcium. It's important to note that although gypsum can be a source of calcium, the material does not neutralize soil acidity.

The last sentence is a good segue into an important point regarding the roles of calcium and magnesium as plant nutrients. Neither calcium nor magnesium chemically react to neutralize soil acidity. That's fundamental soil science and a long-standing scientific fact. Limestone is the most common and cost-effective amendment that neutralizes soil acidity. As mentioned, limestone is calcium carbonate and/or magnesium carbonate. In limestone, the carbonate portion is what chemically reacts to neutralize acidic soils. In addition to carbonates, soil acidity is also neutralized by materials that are oxides, hydroxides and silicates. Calcium and magnesium are basically carriers of carbonates, oxides, hydroxides and silicates.

MISREPRESENTATION OF THE ROLE OF CALCIUM

Periodically, agricultural suppliers spontaneously offer products that claim to be alternatives to limestone. This happens in conventional agriculture, specialty agriculture, horticulture and the food plot industry. Some products are legitimate, but some are bogus. Legitimate alternatives might be sprayable carbonates (a slurry of finely ground limestone in water), oxides, hydroxides and silicates. In fact, Whitetail Institute's soil amendment Impact is an oxide that chemically neutralizes acidic soils and is a short-term sprayable alternative to limestone. The sprayable carbonates slurries, which are legitimate alternatives to bulk limestone, are typically used on residential turfgrass, golf courses and other high-value small-acreage areas to neutralize acidic soils. Sprayable carbonate slurries will neutralize acidic soils in food plots if the

■ In addition to being the best material to neutralize acidic soils, bulk limestone is also the most cost-effective source of supplemental calcium and magnesium for plant nutrition.



user wants to pay a premium price.

Bogus materials and their deceptive advertising with dubious endorsements make this a confusing topic. In recent years, advertising for bogus liming alternatives stated that calcium in a product was an alternative to limestone. With some detective work, I discovered that these bogus products were calcium chloride. How did I know that? I searched the company website and found the Safety Data Sheet for the product being sold, and it clearly stated that the product was calcium chloride. It's a well-established scientific fact in soil science that calcium chloride will not chemically neutralize acidic soils. This topic is periodically addressed in educational materials from extension service soil scientists across the country. Unfortunately, food plotters are outside the normal agricultural communication loop for those topics. That explains why Whitetail Institute staff regularly address this topic and will continue to do so.

I've read in promotional materials for bogus liming materials that calcium is an essential element for plant growth and will neutralize soil acidity. That statement is half-right. Yes, as mentioned, calcium is an essential element for plant growth. However, the statement is also flat-out wrong. Calcium does not chemically neutralize soil acidity, and that scientific fact is indisputable. These products are being deceptively promoted, and their information is also often incorrect and presented out of context.

There are some aspects of biology or agricultural science that are fundamentally important across many areas. I'm referring to photosynthesis, respiration, basic soil chemistry, plant taxonomy and basic concepts of pest management. I'm not talking about reciting every chemical reaction or rote memorization of mind-numbing facts but understanding the general concepts, context and relevance. The basics of soil acidity fall into the broad category of fundamental knowledge. When I was an undergraduate student at Auburn University in the late 1970s, every undergraduate student in the College of Agriculture had to take an introductory soil science class. A significant amount of valuable time in that class was spent on soil acidity and chemical reactions to neutralize soil acidity. The fundamental knowledge of soil acidity has been very useful and invaluable in my education efforts with Whitetail Institute, because there are always false prophets in the business world who prey on potential customers who do not know or have ever been taught. When it comes to topics such as soil fertility and soil acidity, my advice to food plotters is to ask questions and seek answers from professionally trained agricultural professionals with the extension services in your state. Or, simply ask me.



ADVANCED FOOD PLOTTING

State-of-the-art tips and techniques for high-level land managers

■ by Joyce Allison Tredaway, Ph.D. — Agronomist and Weed Scientist



MISTAKEN IDENTITY? NUTSEDGES:

ARE THEY GRASSES OR NOT?

■ This image shows the three-sided triangular stem of yellow nutsedge.

These food plot weeds can be annoying, but you can control them with proper identification and management.

Nutsedges, or nutgrasses, as they are often called, are the subject of many questions submitted to Whitetail Institute. When a customer says they have a grass that wasn't controlled by Arrest Max, I immediately wonder if they mistakenly identified the weed as a grass rather than a nutsedge.

I could cover many sedges, but in this article, I'll focus on yellow (*Cyperus esculentus*) and purple (*Cyperus rotundus*) nutsedges. Yellow and purple nutsedges are in the family Cyperaceae, which are monocots. In fact, purple nutsedge has been called the world's worst weed because it can grow through asphalt, plastic mulch, above-ground

swimming pools and the floor of your house. Grasses are also monocots, which is why people often confuse grasses and sedges. However, graminicides or grass herbicides such as Arrest Max are not active on weeds in the Cyperaceae family. This only leads to confusion, because plants in this species look similar to those in the Poaceae, or grass, family.

IDENTIFICATION

Yellow and purple nutsedges are warm-season perennial weeds that spread by underground stems called stolons or tubers. Purple nutsedge can spread by seed, tubers and rhizomes. In an Arkansas test plot of about 43,500

plants per acre, in one season, purple nutsedge increased to more than 3 million plants per acre, with more than 4.4 million tubers per acre.

From emergence, it takes about 28 days for a viable tuber to emerge. Yellow nutsedge has shiny, narrow, yellow-green leaves, and purple nutsedge has deeper-green leaves. Both species have stems that are three-sided and triangular in cross-section. Yellow nutsedge has tapering ends on the leaf edges. Purple nutsedge, which is much harder to control, has a tip similar in shape to a tanto knife blade tip. In addition, if you dig up the plants, purple nutsedge has smaller tubers than yellow

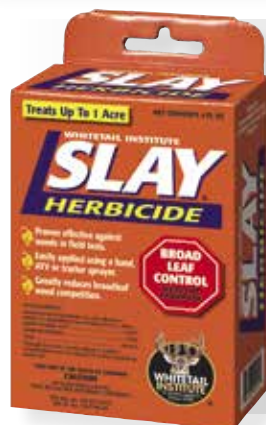
■ Yellow nutsedge has underground stems and tubers.

■ This chart shows the percentage of control of purple nutsedge with post-emergence Slay applications at 4 ounces per acre.

	% OF CONTROL			
	1988	1988	1990	1990
	65 DAT	142 DAT	46 DAT	95 DAT
Yellow Nutsedge	40	54	63	66
Purple Nutsedge	96	94	97	94

	1990		1991	
	59 DAT	148 DAT	64 DAT	107 DAT
Purple Nutsedge	96	94	97	94

DAT= DAYS AFTER TREATMENT



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

SLAY

- Selective broadleaf herbicide.
- 4 ounces treats 1 acre; 1 pint treats 4 acres.
- Slay is field-tested and has proven effective for controlling broadleaf weeds in clover or alfalfa fields. Slay can be easily applied with a four-wheeler or tractor sprayer. Using the right herbicide can eliminate the need for replanting as often and ensure that your food plots have maximum longevity.



sedge plants compared to an 88 percent reduction in the rainy season. However, in the dry season, the remaining plants had no competition from other weeds, and after five months, there was only a 40 percent reduction in the nutsedge population.

If you have a perennial food plot such as clover, you can use Slay for nutsedges. The effectiveness of Slay is fair on yellow nutsedge. It must be sprayed when the nutsedge is 1 to 3 inches tall. If you have a history of yellow nutsedge, you can spray Slay before emergence, because Slay has root and foliar uptake. Surefire crop oil should always be included in Slay applications.

Yellow nutsedge is not an overly competitive weed. Therefore, if you have small patches of it, make sure your fertility and pH levels are optimized. Competitive forages should out-compete yellow nutsedge. You must be careful when looking at the Internet, because many sites recommend off-label herbicide for nutsedge control. Those herbicides can damage your forage stands and have long residual control, which can prevent you from replanting forages for months or even years.

The primary mode of dissipation of Slay is through soil microbial degradation. Therefore, soils high in organic matter will provide less residual control than other soils. Increased temperatures have also been found to increase Slay degradation in the soil.

CONCLUSION

Yellow nutsedge is annoying and can be difficult to deal with, depending on the food plot forage you've planted. However, it isn't an impossible weed to control. It might take some time and a lot of patience, but proper identification followed by proper management can ensure that you have successful food plots without this problematic weed.




nutsedge but has robust stolons. Yellow nutsedge tends to grow in more individual plants than purple nutsedge, which grows more connected to other plants.

MANAGEMENT

Because yellow nutsedge is a perennial weed, managing it can be difficult. Keeping your food plot fallow (leaving it without a crop) for a period and applying glyphosate to the fallow area is a valuable management tool. In addition, research has shown that a combination of tillage and glyphosate is effective in controlling purple nutsedge.

A study conducted in El Salvador demonstrated that an interval of three days between the application of glypho-

sate and tillage caused a 90 percent reduction in purple nutsedge plants, but delays of 11 to 23 days generally resulted in slightly less reduction. A second glyphosate application to the same area 35 days after tillage resulted in more than 90 percent purple nutsedge reduction with all intervals. About three months after the initial treatment, tuber numbers had been reduced to half the original population. Germination of the remaining tubers was reduced by more than 50 percent. It was also determined that rainfall had an influence on the reduction in plant numbers. When glyphosate was applied during the dry season, researchers noted a 79 percent reduction in the number of purple nut-



I've been making poor-man's food plots since 1995. They are made from small natural openings or semi-openings in cover or on the edge of the woods. The goal is to turn these hidden spots into productive staging-area food plots using only hand tools and no large equipment.

I've tried several methods for making these plots and have reached several conclusions about what works best. The plots will typically be $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre, and anyone can make them almost anywhere — even on a permission farm.

Poor-man's plots are a simple way to turn a good hunting area into a great one. Almost all the best stand sites on the farm I hunted for 18 seasons were on the edges of small openings — mostly tiny poor-man's food plots. When located inside cover, these small plots offer excellent hunting during mornings and evenings.

Dry conditions are the biggest cause of failure with poor-man's plots, so plant as early in spring as possible to catch at least a few weeks of decent rains before the summer sun bakes the plot.

By changing to a fall seed blend, you can also plant them in mid- to late summer, before early fall rains, with excellent success.

WHERE TO CREATE IT

Entry and exit routes are the most important factor to consider when deciding where to make a poor-man's plot. The spot you choose must be one you can sneak into and out of without deer knowing you are — or were — there. That means you must find a potential site that has an access route that avoids nearby feeding and bedding areas.

You might need one route to enter and another to leave. That's common with poor-man's plots because of where they're located — ideally right between bedding and feeding areas. The extra work you expend to get in and out clean is critical to long-term success.

Because the wind usually swirls in low valleys, the best spots for poor-man's plots are on a ridge, or at least flat land where the wind is stable.

Any natural opening is a great starting point. I like to place my small plots just inside cover from larger fields whenever I can. This often works well because farmers cannot turn big equipment at the back end of ridges, where they narrow. These areas often grow up in brush you can hollow out to form your ideal plot.

HOW TO BUILD A POOR MAN'S PLOT

My method relies on almost zero power tools — just a chainsaw or powered pole saw — to build. You will, however, need a creative way to mow the plot later if

you plant it with clover. I've even seen guys using old push mowers and riding lawn mowers.

MAKING THE OPENING: Cut off any small trees and large brush as close to the ground as possible so you can plant and mow over them. If there aren't too many trees, consider actually digging down to make your cut below ground level.

The perfect size for a poor-man's plot is roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre — 50 to 75 yards long by 30 to 40 yards wide. Small plots create the best shots with a bow. If possible, orient narrow plots east and west, with the path of the sun, to give your small plot more hours of sunlight.

KILLING THE FOLIAGE: At a typical site, cutting down everything woody with a chainsaw or powered pole saw will still leave lots of thin undergrowth, weeds and grass. A backpack sprayer (about \$90) filled with a glyphosate solution will kill all that stuff. Spray everything, but use proper safety measures, especially wearing gloves, long sleeves, pants and a respiratory mask to prevent contact and inhalation.

PLANT NOW, OR WAIT AND BURN: If the brush and grass is thick, or there are lots of leaves on the ground, you will need to remove the residue so you can get your seeds all the way to dirt for good seed-to-soil contact. That's the key to making these plots produce well. The seeds must get to — or ideally slightly into — the dirt.

If the weeds and grass are light, with very little leaf cover, you can spread the seed, fertilizer, and pelletized or liquid lime right after you spray the herbicide. Then you can let subsequent rains drive the seed down to the ground as the weeds die over the top.

I've planted a few poor-man's plots this way, and I know many other folks who have, too. It works, but again, only if there aren't too many leaves. Seed-to-soil contact is the key.

WAIT UNTIL EVERYTHING DIES AND BURN: If the ground is covered with leaves, you need to burn them off. Wait two weeks after spraying, until everything is dead and dry, before you burn. In some areas, this small fire might require a permit. At the least, notify nearby residents to avoid undue panic.

Burn the plot into the wind. If this goes too slowly, you can always move a short distance into the plot and burn small stretches with the wind. If you fear that the fire might spread into the woods, rake or blow dry leaves away from the edge of the plot.

I've never had a poor-man's plot fire get away. More often, I've had a hard time just keeping them going. But discretion is the better part of valor when dealing

A photograph of a hunting blind, a small enclosed box with windows and a door, mounted on a metal tripod stand. The stand is positioned in a field of lush green crops, likely soybeans. In the background, there is a dense line of tall trees with green foliage. The sky is visible through the trees, showing a mix of light and shadow.

Tiny plots in out-of-the-way openings can turn a good hunting area into a great one.

■ Text and photos by *Bill Winke*

HOW TO MAKE A POOR-MAN'S FOOD PLOT

with fire, so have someone there to help, and be careful.

FERTILIZING AND LIMING: A soil test is an important first step when planting any food plot. (You can buy prepaid soil test pouches online from Whitetail Institute). If you don't want to mess with a test, you can take the safe route and assume the soil needs help. You're probably right.

Generally, plots in or near timber are acidic from the decay of leaves that have fallen on the ground through the years. Acidic soil and most food plot seeds are not compatible. You will need to raise the pH before anything will grow well there.

If you're a real farmer, you know about spreading bulk lime on your fields to maintain proper pH (normally to get them into the 6.5 to 7.0 range). However, it can be inconvenient or perhaps impossible to find a good way to spread bulk lime on a small food plot in the woods.

Most of the plots I've made in the timber had a pH of roughly 5.5. That's too low for clover and brassica blends. Instead of trying to get a bulk spreader to those locations, buy 300 pounds of pel-

letized lime (per ¼ acre) at a farm store, lawn and garden store, or farm co-op. A walk-behind lime spreader provides a good way to spread it and is a good investment, but you can also use an over-the-shoulder spreader — if your budget requires — or an ATV spreader if you want to move past the poor-man's plot definition.

A liquid calcium remedy, such as Whitetail Institute's Impact, is another good option. This is a portable concentrated formulation that will improve pH immediately. Though rated for ½ acre, I would put two jugs per ¼ acre when planting areas that have been covered by leaves in the past. Again, these areas tend to be very acidic.

Imperial Whitetail Clover is a good first seeding for reasons I will cover in a bit. Clover likes phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) fertilizer. These are central ingredients of the normal fertilizer blends. The third ingredient is nitrogen (N), which clover doesn't require to grow well. Fertilizers are listed by those three ingredients: N-P-K. For example, 19-19-19 contains 19 percent by weight of active

ingredients in each of these categories.

To keep it simple, tell the person you buy the fertilizer from that you want roughly 75 to 100 pounds per acre of actual P and K for your plot. If they don't know what that means or give you a blank stare, don't trust them to get it right. Just buy 150 pounds of Triple 13 for the per-quarter-acre of plot size, or 100 pounds of Triple 19 per quarter-acre — if they have that blend. The nitrogen in those blends is not needed for clover and is basically wasted money, but it might be difficult to buy bagged fertilizer that doesn't contain nitrogen.

The best option is to go to a farm co-op, where the staff can likely give you exactly what you need for your plot. Again, you want roughly 75 to 100 pounds actual P and K per acre but measured for just ¼ or ½ acre, depending on your plot size.

A bag-style over-the-shoulder spreader will do the job, but the same walk-behind spreader or ATV spreader you used for the lime would make the job a lot easier.

It might be too wet to get your poor-man's plots planted in spring, or perhaps you cannot get to it in time. No worries.

Set Your Sights on Brillion Farm Equipment

Brillion Farm Equipment offers a full-line of equipment suited for food plot enthusiasts. The Food Plot Seeder is an all-in-one solution for food plots handling seedbed preparation, seed metering and placement, as well as seedbed finishing. Brillion's ground driven Till 'N Seed' shreds existing food plots and plants numerous food plot seed mixtures. All products are backed by Brillion's years as an industry leader in the Seeder and Pulverizer industry!

**Till 'N Seed'
Model BPSBA-8**

The Till 'N Seed is now available in 8' working widths in pull-type or three-point hitch configurations.

**Food Plot Seeder
Model FPSB-6**



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You can plant a brassica blend such as Winter-Greens or Imperial No Plow in late summer. As with clover, seed-to-soil contact is the key to good germination with brassicas, so if there's anything on top of the ground that would prevent the seeds from getting to the dirt, you need to rake, till or burn it off before you broadcast the seed.

PLANTING: I already recommended planting clover if you are planting in spring and a brassica blend if planting in summer.

Imperial Whitetail Clover is easy to establish, easy to maintain and will stand up to deer browsing pressure for several years. Moreover, deer like the white clover blend, and it's very good for them. The seeding will be a little thin during the establishment year, but it will be thick during the next two to three years. After the clover starts to thin out, it's generally wise to kill it, ideally till it under, and plant something else in its place for fall. Winter-Greens planted in late summer are a good choice.


An over-the-shoulder seed spreader is the best way to broadcast seeds. There are several good ones, including some that are very affordable. I recently started spending a bit more for better quality. It's worth it. I've been using the Hooyman model, and it has proven to be durable and accurate.

Set the spreader opening small so you don't overseed from the beginning. It's better to make two trips over the small plot than seed it too heavily and run out short of completing the job. With experience, you can figure out the settings you need to cover your plots in one pass and write that down for reference.

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PRAY FOR RAIN: All that remains is a few good rain showers to get the seeds embedded into the soil and germinated, and then at least one more rain to feed the young seedlings for the first critical month or two of growth.

MAINTAINING THE PLOT: Three steps will keep your Whitetail Clover plots growing well for years. You need to mow it each summer (early June is a good target time), and you need to keep fertilizing it each winter. The third maintenance requirement depends on the outcome of the planting. Sometimes, you must spray the

plot with a grass-selective herbicide, which kills just the grass and not the clover, such as Arrest Max from Whitetail Institute. If the plot is grassy, this is an important step.

In most cases, you can mow clover to remove broadleaf weeds, but in the worst cases, you can also spray for them. This is especially useful if you can't get a mower to the plot. In that case, use Slay herbicide from Whitetail Institute to clean up the broadleaf — not grass — weeds.

CONCLUSION

You're done. If you add the cost of herbicide, fertilizer and seed, you will see that a small poor-man's plot is very reasonable. When established, these little plots will quickly become your favorite hunting locations. Making at least one poor-man's plot at your hunting area is well worth the investment.





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Jason Say waged a three-year campaign and endured many sleepless nights to kill the best buck of his life.

■ by *Scott Bestul*

Jason Say is no stranger to big whitetails. In addition to tagging great bucks across the country, the Pennsylvania native has shot giant deer in his home state, largely on properties he owns or manages. But as the 2022 season drew near, Say had vowed to chase one Keystone State deer above all others, and he put hunts in other states on hold so he could complete that quest.

“This buck was on my hit list two years ago,” Say said. “In fact, he was the No. 1 buck I was after. But I had four good bucks on that property that year, and one of the others made the mistake of showing up first. I was lucky enough to tag him, so this buck — which was probably a 130-class 10-point then — got a pass for that year.”

The 2021 season resulted in a similar scenario.

“The nice 10 had made a good jump, but so had another buck, and that deer was much more predictable and patternable,” Say said. “So I bailed on the 10-point and went after the other deer. Once again, he had another year.”

But when Summer 2022 rolled in, Say’s Moultrie Mobile camera started capturing pics that changed his entire hunting plan for the season.



KEYSTONE STATE QUEST



■ Say's buck was a main-frame 10-point with a 3-inch kicker off one brow. The 5-½-year-old Pennsylvania buck grossed 163-3/8 inches.

Photo by Jason Say

“The first pics I got of him that caught my attention were in July, and he was so good I decided that not only was he the only buck I’d shoot at home, but I was not leaving the state on another hunt until I’d killed him,” he said. “I had to call a few people and tell them my hunting plans for other places were on hold for the time being, and I anticipated that being a problem. But once guys saw pics of that deer, they got it.”

Say, who’s been a savvy land manager for years, knew he had to bring his A-game to arrange a meeting with the elusive buck.

“One of the reasons he’d survived so long — this is heavily hunted Pennsylvania, after all — was that he was fairly unpredictable and moved around,” Say said. “But from photos — I have 20

cameras out on this farm — we felt we knew his core area and some of his preferred bedding areas. So when it came time to get food plots in, we wanted a variety of foods planted in and around that core area. I didn’t want him to have to move very far to find what he needed or wanted.”

Say amped up his food plotting efforts, creating seven new plots within 200 yards of the buck’s preferred bedding areas.

“I planted a smorgasbord,” he said

with a laugh. “We had Fusion, No-Plow, Beets and Greens, and clover. It’s been my experience that variety is important. Deer not only want to eat different foods, but they are excellent at knowing exactly what their bodies need at a particular time. In my opinion, this is the strongest argument for having a broad selection for deer to choose from.”

As summer progressed, Say’s cameras filled up with photos of his target buck.



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Photo by Jason Say

"He was being pretty predictable, unlike my previous experience with him," he said. "And then, just as the archery season opener approached, he started getting funky again. And I have to admit, I panicked a bit. I mean, I was obsessed with this buck, and when my Moultrie camera would send a pic to my phone, I'd run to it to see if it was him. I'd be up at 3 a.m., looking at pics and trying to figure him out."

The weekend of the archery opener, Say took a youngster hunting and didn't enjoy any stand time himself. And although the next weekend was free, conditions weren't great for hunting any of the prime spots where Say expected to encounter the buck.

"I actually decided to hunt what I call a low-impact plot — one where I believed my chances were pretty slim, but at least I wouldn't disturb anything in 'the good spots,'" he said. "I was sitting in a ground blind alone, no camera guy with me, and I was pretty surprised when a 140-inch 9-point that the big one ran with showed up and fed into the plot."

As the big 9 fed, Say spotted movement behind the first deer.

"It was the big one, and I couldn't believe it," he said. "We had an almost zero acorn crop, and I think the draw of the food plots was just super good, because those two fed into that plot like it was the only show in town. They were completely relaxed. My only concern was the fading light. There wasn't a lot of legal light left and these deer were nose-down and feeding, taking their time. Finally, the big one walked into range and gave me a broadside shot. I was sick when I watched the arrow hit him high in the shoulder."

Though he gave the buck overnight before attempting to track it, Say knew he was facing a tall order to find the deer.

"I was just sick to my stomach," he said. "I followed blood as long as I could, and then I grid-searched. I brought in a guy with a tracking dog, and after that a guy with a cadaver dog. I walked 9 miles in the course of the



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next week before I finally gave up. At that point in the season, I honestly didn't know what to do. I had so much invested in that buck, and I'd screwed up my big opportunity. Worse yet, I didn't know if he was alive or not."

Not knowing what else to do, Say stayed out of the buck's core area and simply waited.

"And then one day, he showed up on one of my cell cams, sparring with another buck," he said. "Suddenly it was game on again. And I went right back after him. I spent the next 44 days of the archery season, with a total of 70 sits, just for him. At night, I was going through last year's pics, trying to see where he was at such-and-such a date, trying to forecast where I might run into him. And fortunately, we didn't have an acorn crop to speak of, so deer on that farm just kept coming to our food plots. It was really an ideal situation, in hindsight."

Finally, on the final day of bow season, Say saw the buck.

"I was watching a food plot and heard a grunt back in the woods," he said. "I grunted back and heard the buck coming, and it was him. He walked into the food plot, looked around for the buck he'd heard and, when he didn't see him, walked off."

That carried Say's quest for the buck into the rifle season, and he felt added pressure to get a tag on the giant. Studying trail cam pics, Say believed the buck's physical condition had deteriorated, and he appeared to be limping.

"He also seemed to be visiting one No-Plow plot pretty faithfully, and the frequency of the pics told me he was living somewhere close by," he said. "So I decided to devote all my effort to that spot."

Say settled into a hang-on stand and, even after more than 40 days of hard

effort, readied himself for another long sit. His patience was rewarded.

"I'd been in that stand literally all day, and there were like six minutes of legal shooting left," he said. "Suddenly I could see a big deer coming through the brush, and before he reached the plot, I knew it was him. Even though I thought I was prepared, I was shaking pretty hard. I mean, here's the buck I've been after for three seasons — one I'd hit and never thought I'd get a chance at again — standing in the food plot at 140 yards. My scope is doing circles, and I literally have minutes left to make this happen. Finally, I got a bipod out of my pack, put it on my knee and rested the rifle on that. I was able to settle in and take what felt like a good shot."

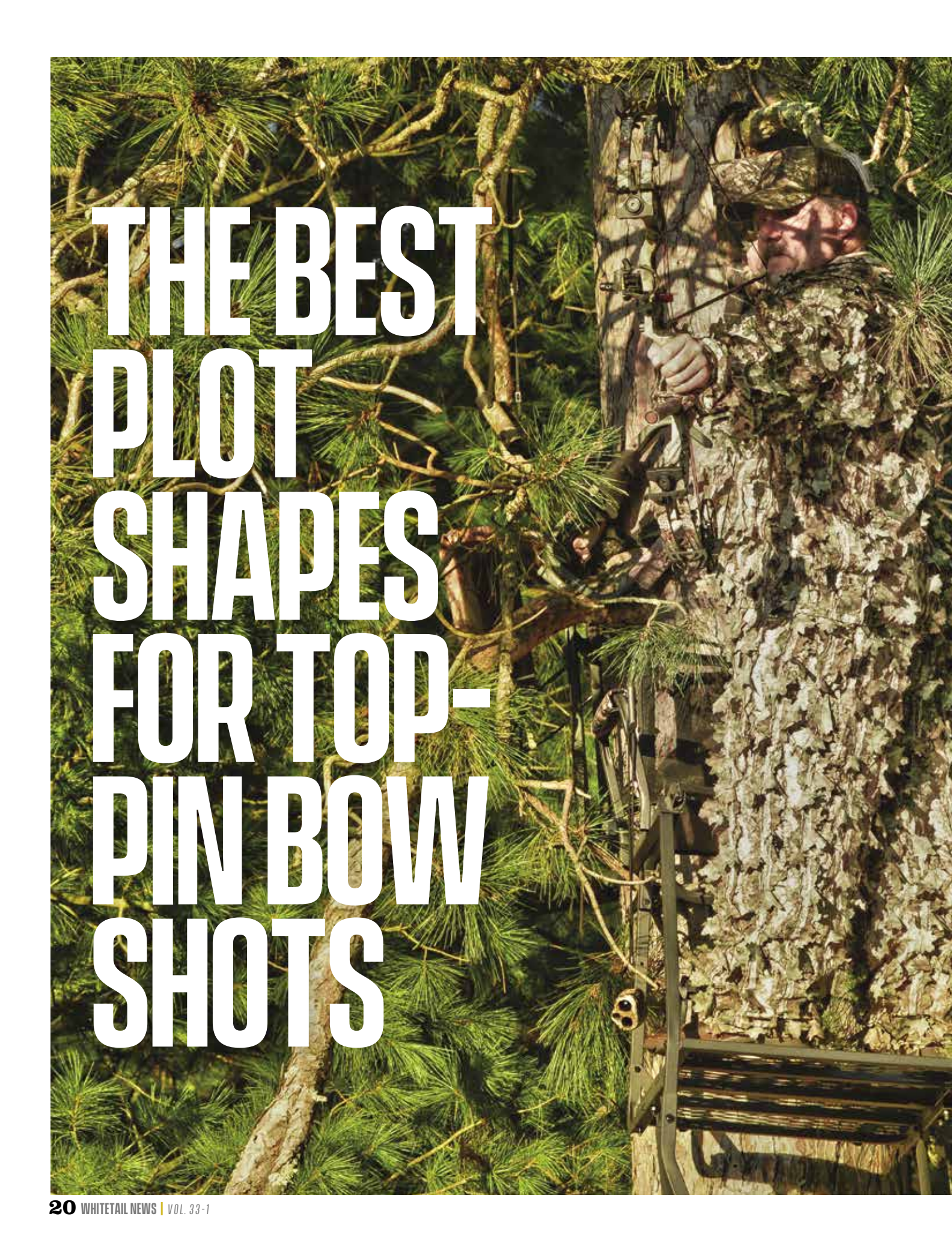
But the buck tore off the plot and, with daylight fading, Say wasn't certain if he'd hit the deer.

"I sat there for 45 minutes, got down and walked to where I'd last seen him," he said. "I couldn't find any blood at all, and now I'm wondering if I'd missed. Not wanting to bump him and mess things up even more, I decided to leave him overnight. When I came back in the morning, I found the buck, not 5 yards from where I'd stopped looking the night before."

Say can't articulate what he thought when he realized his quest had finally come to an end.

"I honestly lost my mind," he said with a laugh. "I started calling all the guys who'd helped me and got them to come look at a deer I'd basically built my life around. To be standing over a deer like that, which was not only bigger than any Pennsylvania buck I'd killed but was unlike any deer I'd ever hunted, was just hard to take in."



A full-page photograph of a hunter in camouflage gear aiming a bow from a tree stand in a pine forest. The hunter is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking through the bow's sight. The tree stand is made of wood and has a metal rail. The background is filled with green pine needles and brown branches. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

THE BEST PLOT SHAPES FOR TOP- PIN BOW SHOTS



Your plot's layout largely influences deer movement. Try one of these configurations for a slam-dunk archery opportunity.

■ by *Darron McDougal*

Imagine this: You worked meticulously to cultivate a food plot in an excellent hunting location during spring or summer. In the weeks before the archery opener, a couple of really big bucks begin hitting your plot every afternoon like clockwork. The season opens, and you just need the wind to cooperate so you can hunt them. It'll be perfect in two days.

The big day finally arrives, and your enthusiasm surges as you hike in to hunt after a refreshing scent-free shower. You reach your stand, climb up and settle in. It's a beautiful fall afternoon, and you're on the edge of your seat with anticipation. A half-hour before dark, there they are: the two bruiser bucks that have consumed your thoughts for at least a month.

They enter the plot 70 yards away and graze on the luscious carpet of Imperial Whitetail Clover. Your heart slams inside your chest, but the bucks aren't coming closer. Suddenly, you glance at your phone and realize legal shooting hours have ended. Bummer. Now you have to figure out how to climb down and leave. Spooking the bucks is practically inevitable. What's more, your chances of seeing them again at this plot are slim to none.

That scenario repeats itself constantly across whitetail country. Many deer hunters take the time to plant food for deer — sometimes a lot of it. And although food is extremely important in attracting deer to your hunting property, presentation is just as important if you're a bowhunter. Here, we'll discuss a few plot shapes that will likely direct deer by your stand at broadside at 20 to 25 yards.

■ Failing to properly plan your food plot shape can result in missed chances and poor opportunities. Go with a proven layout to facilitate better shots.



HOURGLASS

An hourglass-shaped plot is best positioned in the middle of switchgrass or timber, and the design encourages deer to enter the plot on one end and then pinch through the narrow middle en route to the opposite end. The ends can be fairly long, like a tube shape or even large circles, but the key is to design it so the middle pinches down to 20 to 25 yards. Position a tree stand or blind on either side of the skinny funnel so you can hunt various winds.

If you're hunting during the rut, that pinch is a great place to set a subordinate buck decoy, as it will be visible from both ends of the plot. Then, if you grunt to a buck, the decoy provides a visual aid to make your grunt credible, and if the buck is in the mood, he'll come in.

CHEVRON

This essentially V-shaped plot can be effective when placed between a bedding area and destination food source. Design it so the point faces away from the bedding area and toward the destination food. This coaxes deer into feeding along one of two thoroughfares, giving them options. Still, both converge at the point. Make the lanes no wider than 20 to 25 yards. Place your stand or blind on the inner point, and make sure you can cover both lanes. Hunt it with the wind blowing toward the point.

HORSESHOE

The goal with this shape is to have bucks enter from one end or the other and then feed toward the bottom of the U. Or, when bucks begin cruising and scent-checking, they might travel from one end to the other. If there's timber or switchgrass on the horseshoe's inside edges, bucks will have to wrap around and walk by your stand to see any does feeding on the opposite end.

It's also a deadly setup for laying down a fresh doe-estrus scent trail. Drag a soaked rag from one end around to the other. Bucks entering on either end can pick up the trail and should cruise it right by your stand. I'd have a stand or blind on the inside and outside edges of the U to have more flexibility with the wind, and I'd make the bottom of the horseshoe 25 yards wide or less.

WINE BOTTLE

Whether it's a larger destination plot or a smaller secluded timber plot, design this plot with the bottleneck aimed at a perceived primary bedding area. Make the bottleneck no wider than 20 to 25 yards across. Position stands or blinds on both sides of the bottleneck (again, for various winds) right where it widens out to the bottle portion. This will yield slam-dunk shots in most cases. Bucks entering the plot in the bottleneck and heading for the plot's larger bottle portion should walk down the pipe at 25 yards or closer and broadside, if not slightly quartering away, as they pass.

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TRICK IT OUT

The plot shapes discussed previously are ideal in conjunction with extra points of interest. What am I getting at? Think about things that provide additional allure right where you want a buck to offer a shot. What will give a buck more reasons to use the plot shape as intended and then stop broadside at 25 yards or closer without a mouth-grunt? Here are some ideas.

Paw out a big mock scrape, and douse it with buck urine or a scrape-specific scent blend (check your state's regulations). No licking branch nearby? Suspend a hemp rope from a limb higher up, and let it dangle above the scrape. Or bury a cedar post into the ground for bucks to rub with their antlers and scent glands. These are visual signposts deer use to communicate, and bucks are likely to visit them each time they're in the plot. It's another reason for bucks to use the plot as you want them to, and it's a visual distraction that can take the buck's focus away from you — and make him stop — as you position for a shot and draw your bow.

A small water hole is another idea. It adds a necessity, and putting it 20 yards

away where you want deer to pass will make most stop and drink before moving on, giving you more time to settle your top pin and make your shot. The most effective shapes for incorporating an oasis are probably the hourglass and wine bottle.

GET IT RIGHT

Before you start with any of those plot shapes, download a map-based hunting app such as PlotPerfection. If you've located buck bedding areas in the past while scouting, drop pins on them. Then consider any other food sources — don't forget hard and soft mast — on your property and adjacent properties. Use common sense and past hunting knowledge to predict deer movement patterns. Then, with the satellite overview in your palm, imagine how you can incorporate one of the aforementioned plot shapes into that pattern to generate an easy shot opportunity.

Speaking of mast crops, if you can design your plot with fruit-bearing trees or acorn-producing oaks dropping goodies into the plot 20 to 25 yards from your stand or blind, all the better.

WORK SMARTER

Obviously, creating a specific plot shape can be a lot of work. It might involve clearing a lot of trees, brush and other various obstructions. If it's a bigger job than you want or can undertake, look at existing openings, trails and roads in the vicinity. See if you can somehow start your plot shape with what's already cleared, and then clear out some more to achieve your desired final shape.

THE CLOSER. THE BETTER

I don't know about you, but I'd rather shoot a buck at 15 yards than at 35. The closer the better. A shot opportunity at a big buck is intense enough without needlessly adding yardage. Of course, a lack of planning with plot layout can yield an outcome like the example at the beginning of the article. If you don't want to face a long shot or miss your opportunity, choose a proven plot shape to get a top-pin shot at your dream buck.



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■ Soil condition is the first and most important aspect of food plot success. It's the foundation for everything that follows.

FOOD PLOTS 401:

THE SOIL

After you're comfortable with food plotting basics, you can produce even better results by using advanced soil management techniques.

■ by Matt Harper

I have no misconceptions that I got through college solely on my own abilities. Unquestionably, it was by the grace of God and the fact that he abides fools by blessing them with family, friends, mentors and an occasional professor who specializes in leniency.

As with many 18-year-olds on their own for the first time, college was like being thrown into a pond to learn to swim. I floundered for the first couple of years and somehow stayed afloat — not with an elegant backstroke, but more like a thrashing doggy paddle. Thankfully, the curriculum for the first two years tends to be easier. But when you move to your junior and senior years, things get serious. As you start taking 400-level classes, you realize you're in the final phase of your education. I believe education never really ends, but in terms of college accreditation, 400 level classes represent the finish line. They take you beyond the basics and delve deep into advanced aspects of a field to the point you can earn a degree.

In food plotting, each year brings new opportunities to learn from mistakes, deal with challenges and continue the pursuit of better plots, management and hunting. You can learn the basics — the practices that will produce a productive plot, improve your deer herd and put meat in the freezer. But as you learn more and begin to evolve your methods, your food plotting moves to a new level of success and satisfaction. I don't believe there's a pinnacle of food plot knowledge, because if you continuously seek education, you will learn more but never know it all. No matter how many years you play in the dirt, it's impossible to know everything. Remember, we're dealing with nature, which produces endless variables. The title of this article shouldn't give you the impression that reading it will fill your knowledge tank. Rather, it's intended to discuss the idea of building on general food plot methods. That's what 400-level education is about — understanding of the fundamentals and building upon them.

THE FOUNDATION

Every advanced-level class begins with a brief overview of the general knowledge you must have to build upon. One of the most important fundamental aspects of food plotting is soil health and condition. That relates to proper soil pH to grow a specific food plot variety and the proper nutrient content to support the plants in that plot. Getting that piece right will make or break success, regardless of subsequent practices. Soil testing followed by applying pH-altering substances such as lime and then fertilizer to match the specific soil and plant needs for your crop is the critical first step.

The next step is choosing the right food plot variety that will grow well in your soil and match your objectives. Closely following recommended planting times and directions fall in line next. Finally, maintain the plot by weed

prevention along with continued soil treatments. If you do all those things and are blessed with good growing conditions, the result should be a productive food plot — one to be proud of and excited about hunting when the season arrives. With that as our foundation, let's examine how we can dig deeper to produce even better results by using advanced soil management methods.

QUADRANT SOIL MANAGEMENT

As mentioned, the condition of the soil is the first and most critical aspect of food plot success. It's the foundation upon which all pieces are built. The tricky part about soil is that quality and type vary dramatically across the whitetail world. That can even be true within one hunting property and or even one food plot. For example, a food plot that begins in a river bottom and continues up a slope to the crest of a ridge will likely vary in condition and type from lower to higher elevation. In such situations, I find it useful to break the plot into quadrants and take soil samples for each.

Common soil sampling practice holds that you should take multiple samples from the plot and mix them together to get a comprised result. If you're dealing with a plot that has variable soil characteristics, divide the plot into areas that likely have different soil compositions, and take samples from each. For example, you can take samples in the lowland area, a few more halfway up the slope and some from atop the ridge. You will end up with three test results with specific recommendations for lime and fertilizer applications. This practice is common in modern farming, in which large fields are mapped out and tested each year. Then fertilizer is applied in specific levels by quadrant. That allows for financial and environmental efficiencies because you're not over- or under-applying fertilizer but rather applying the exact amount needed for that part of the field. Those applicators cost tens of thousands of dollars, so you will likely not use that. However, you can still apply specific fertilizer amounts and compositions by flagging different areas and applying lime and fertilizer based on the test results.

Some soil tests will also show you the soil type, which can provide valuable information, such as the general characteristics of the soil. It can tell you if the soil is clay, loam, clay loam, sandy loam or something else, which is important to knowing what food plot varieties you should consider. For example, one of my plots has Sharpsburg series and Macksburg series soils. Sharpsburg is moderately well-draining soil, but Macksburg is somewhat poorly drained soil. If planting legumes, alfalfa would perform better in Sharpsburg and clover better in Macksburg. In that plot, I've used Imperial Alfa-Rack Plus, which is a combination of alfalfa and clover. The deep-rooted alfalfa is more predominant in the Sharpsburg soil, and the clover is more abundant in areas of the plot with Macksburg. The transitional areas tend to have equal amounts of both.

MANAGING ORGANIC MATTER

The level of organic matter in the soil is another aspect of soil health. Organic matter is defined as the amount or fraction of plant and animal material in various stages of decomposition. In general, the higher the level of organic matter in the soil, the healthier and more productive the soil. The final phase of organic matter is referred to as stable organic matter and is commonly called humus. Humus has many benefits, including improving the soil's ability to absorb and hold moisture, promoting soil microbial growth and diversity, improving the ability to hold vital plant nutrients, and helping maintain more constant soil pH. Areas with higher agricultural productivity typically have higher percentages of organic matter in the soil. If your food plots lack organic matter, a few things can improve the situation. Adding compost to the field and then disking it in is a great way to increase organic matter, and it can produce quick, dramatic results. Although it takes a bit longer, adding animal manure and cover crops (green manure) will increase organic matter through time.

CROP ROTATION

Crop rotation is a common agricultural practice used to improve and maintain soil health. The idea is that if one plant type grows in the soil for multiple years, it increases the potential for disease and pest problems, and can build up harmful chemical components in some commonly used plant varieties. Corn and soybean rotation is the most common agricultural example.

■ Food plot crop rotations can include several combinations. Consider how you'll use the plot for hunting before choosing a scheme.

Food plot variety rotations can include multiple combinations.

How a plot is used for hunting is an issue in choosing the right rotational scheme. If you need to replant a perennial legume plot, such as Imperial Whitetail Clover, that you hunt extensively during the early and midseasons, what's your best choice? I'm not sure there is a best choice but rather multiple good choices. I've had success by planting an annual, such as Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus. The variety attracts deer during the early and midseason, and is a non-legume, making it an ideal rotation option with clover. Plus, because it's an annual, you can reseed with Imperial Whitetail Clover the next year.

If you have a sufficiently large field — an acre or more — my favorite rotational practice is to plant the field in different sections with various varieties. For example, I might have a 1½-acre field that contains a half-acre of clover, a half-acre of Oats Plus and a half-acre of Winter Greens. I can rotate the oats and brassicas each year and then incorporate the clover into the rotation when it's time to replant. In that way, I always have the varieties in that field I want and can still rotate plant types. Additionally, that combination provides a year-round food source.

MANAGING EROSION

Erosion is one of the costliest occurrences that can affect a food plot. Even though you can't see dollar bills flowing down a washout, the loss of that valuable topsoil costs you more than you might expect. Topsoil is the fer-

tile plant growing layer of soil that holds most of the valuable organic matter. Loss of topsoil through erosion will result in poor-quality soil and poor-quality food plots that will take money and time to rebuild.

Wind and water are the two most common causes of erosion. Water erosion is often obvious, especially in sloping fields, as washouts form when heavy rain falls on plots that have been tilled recently and plant growth has not yet begun. Although soil is obviously lost where the ditch forms, you also lose topsoil from the surrounding area, as it washes away with the flow of the water draining toward the washout. That can even occur in fields that appear to be relatively flat and don't have apparent washouts.

To avoid water erosion, implement new practices into your soil management methods. Creating permanent waterways is a great way to reduce water erosion. These are areas in the field where water tends to drain naturally. Because erosion occurs predominantly when soil has been tilled, planting soil-holding varieties in those areas and then leaving them untilled will dramatically reduce water erosion. Common waterway plantings include native grasses that, when established, are hardy and can exist for years. You must take that area out of the food plot to create a waterway, but that doesn't mean it can't be beneficial for more than erosion control. Such spots often become bedding areas for deer and are used by many types of wildlife, such as upland game birds and turkeys. Also, you can inter-seed legumes and herb varieties with the grass to provide additional food for deer and



other wildlife.

Wind erosion is less noticeable unless you're standing in a freshly tilled field on a windy day, watching your topsoil blow away in a dust cloud. The Dust Bowl that occurred in the 1930s is a dramatic example of wind erosion. The mismanaged but encouraged tilling of soil that for years had been grasslands, combined with drought and high winds, caused one of the worst erosion disasters in modern history. To avoid or at least minimize wind erosion, plant cover crops, which are plant varieties that grow quickly and hold soil. They're also called nurse crops when combined with the targeted plant variety for that field. Planting Whitetail Oats Plus along with a perennial such as Imperial Clover is an example of using a cover crop. The oats come up quickly and hold the soil, letting the slower growing perennial establish, acting as a cover and nurse crop. When the oats are eaten or mowed off, you're left with a field of clover. This seeding method is also good for decreasing water erosion.

Another practice that can help minimize wind and water erosion is using a



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no-till application. No-till applications are done with specific equipment, such as a no-till drill, which has coulters that create a small channel where the seed is dispersed. This allows for minimum soil disturbance, which decreases the extent of eroded soil loss. Food plotters might not want to spend the money for a no-till drill, but if you're concerned with erosion, you can often hire someone with a no-till drill to seed the plot. In some cases, no-till drills are available through the NRCS or wildlife organizations.

CONCLUSION

I saw once where a farmer said he figured he had about 60 tries in his life to produce a perfect crop. Each year, he

tried to learn more from his previous experiences to chase that goal. The idea has stuck with me since, and I take it to heart each spring. There's always something we can learn or some new trick we implement that makes that next crop a little bit better. Growing things starts with the soil. It's what's left after the plants are gone and, for that matter, after you and I are long gone. The better we make that soil, the closer we can get to growing the perfect food plot, and more important, the better we leave the soil to those who follow us.



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The excuses for not wearing a safety harness are many, but it usually boils down to laziness and bravado, neither of which can save you when gravity's grip snatches you.

■ by Mark Olis

Much of the country eagerly awaits November for the whitetail rut, but most Alabama hunters keep an eye toward January for breeding season mayhem. Like any hardcore Southern hunter, Joe Hamm was perched high above the forest floor in his tree stand one cool January 2000 morning, waiting on a noseey buck to trot through.

The day before, Hamm had installed a hang-on stand some 35 feet up a tree in a hardwood creek bottom between two lush food plots. Hamm admits he likes to climb high in the stand. He used screw-in steps up to the platform for entry and was optimistic about his chances at a mature swamp buck.

Hamm has a knack for knowing where big bucks live and travel. The previous year, almost to the day, he killed a great buck from the same spot where he had the hang-on. At about 9:30 a.m., Hamm's fortune would again place a mature Alabama whitetail in his path. Hamm fired one shot, and the buck struggled through the tangle and out of sight. Feeling confident, Hamm sat for 10 minutes, after which he unloaded his rifle, tied it off to a rope and lowered it from his stand.

Then, Hamm stood up facing the tree to disconnect his lineman's belt, which he wore ascending the tree and while he sat in the stand hunting. However, while sitting in a hang-on stand, a lineman's belt must be unattached from the tree while the climber transitions off the platform and onto a climbing aid to get below the stand. When the hunter is below the platform, he can reattach the lineman's belt around the tree for a safe descent.

"Well, when I got ready to come down out of the tree, I swung around and grabbed a limb to step down onto the first step," Hamm said. "I got about halfway down to the first step and the limb that I was holding broke."

In an instant, Hamm was being pulled to the forest floor 35 feet below. His right hand slipped from around the back of the tree, and he desperately tried a last attempt to get his foot onto the step, which he missed.

"I knew then that I was gone," he said. "I knew there was no turning back from that point."

In a final effort to somehow better the outcome of the fall, Hamm kicked himself free of the platform in hopes that he would land on his feet. It worked, Hamm crashed to the ground feet first. His left foot hit first and took the full brunt of the crushing energy and trauma.

"I don't know if it knocked me out or if I was in shock for a minute or more — it felt like forever," he said. "I remember looking around in a daze, and then I remember looking at my leg. My leg was turned all the way around pointing back up toward my body, and my foot was awkwardly turned up on its side. I stared and then got my leg and turned it back around. I knew it wasn't good at all. I started screaming and hollering for help."

Hamm was far from the road, and no one knew where he was. A half-mile of woods and thicket separated him from his truck, so he began crawling. "I was crawling and screaming through the woods with my leg just dragging behind me," he said.

Somewhere along the daunting journey, another hunter showed up out of nowhere. Hamm said he didn't know who he was or where he was hunting, but the hunter yelled back to Hamm. When the man found Hamm, he quickly got his arm under him and helped walk him out to an old logging road. Hamm gave his truck keys to the stranger, who drove the vehicle to get him.

When Hamm was loaded into the passenger side, the stranger navigated out of the woods and onto the blacktop towards the hospital in Selma, Alabama. "They x-rayed it and said, 'We don't have the capability to do anything with this,'" Hamm said. "So they put me in an ambulance. They took me from Selma to Carraway Hospital in Birmingham, which was the trauma center back then. The doctor at Carraway said, 'I'm going to do the best I can do, but I'm not guaranteeing anything.' I was in surgery for four or five hours, and they tried to piece together what was there."

The doctor later told Hamm's wife there wasn't a piece (of bone?) larger than a dime from his knee to his ankle. Using cadaver-bone paste and a slew of treatments, doctors fought for a year to save Hamm's leg. However, six months into the recovery process, a staph infection set in and slowly began to grow up the leg. After trying months of the strongest antibiotics available, the doctor said it was time to look at different treatment options.

"The doctor said we needed to talk about amputation," Hamm said. "I went and got two more opinions from orthopedic surgeons, and their opinion was that they would have amputated the day I came in. I guess the doctor was trying to give me every chance. They amputated, and I had to do rehab and all that and get a prosthesis."

AVOIDABLE FALLS

The unfortunate part of most tree stand falls is that they're avoidable if proper equipment and precautions are taken. "Any height-related activity has a fall risk," said Jake Nelson, product manager for Summit Treestands. "There's no way to get around that with the use of a tree stand."

Fortunately, there have been many advancements in tree stand safety since Hamm's fall 23 years ago. Those advancements have been in safety standards and the advancement of the fall-arrest full-body harness now included with every tree stand sold. Summit Treestands began including a full-body harness with each stand in the early 2000s. By 2004, the industry adopted the practice as a standard for tree stand manufacturers. Those efforts have significantly reduced tree-stand-related accidents and deaths.

“There’s no room for error out there. And it happens really quickly, in the blink of an eye.” — Joe Hamm, tree stand accident survivor

In the mid-1990s tree stand manufacturers formed the Treestand Manufacturers Association, which created and implemented standards for the industry to follow. Those standards are now rolled under the American Society for Testing and Materials. With more than 30,000 members and 12,500 global standards in 140 countries, ASTM sets the testing, manufacturing and safety standards for the tree stand industry.

Those stringent safety standards further advanced the full-body harness. Around 2009, full-body harnesses began featuring a suspension-relief strap. A relief strap is typically anchored to the harness near the hipbone and neatly stored in a built-in pouch. It consists of a length of material that can be tied off to the opposite lineman’s loop on the other hip. When properly adjusted, it offers a support strap to stand on to relieve pressure from the legs and increase blood flow after a fall. This helps many fall victims recover and let them climb down or at least offer relief so they can

make a call or wait for help.

“One of the most critical aspects is knowing your equipment and being familiar with the equipment,” Nelson said. “It’s reading the manufacturer’s instructions and watching the videos referenced in the manuals.” In fact, there is a list of best practices to keep you safe while using a tree stand. Everyone who hunts from a stand should know and practice these.

TREE STAND SAFETY GUIDELINES ARE FOR YOUR SAFETY

Know: Read and watch manufacturer instructions and videos. This might sound like boring homework, but these materials show the proper use of climbing a tree stand. And only use certified equipment, too.

Connected: The only way to be safe while using a tree stand is to wear a fall-arrest full-body harness and have it safely connected to a tree or safety line from the time you leave the ground until the time you return to it.

Double connectivity: While using a hang-on stand, the climber must use a lineman’s belt around the tree and the safety harness tether to a tree strap before removing one of the safety aids when transitioning in and out of the stand. This ensures 100 percent safe connection even while climbing in and out of a hang-on, and it would have prevented Hamm’s fall. There’s also the option of installing a 30-foot safety line from top to bottom of hang-on and other stands. The climber connects to the safety line at the ground or from the tree stand via a Prusik knot, which ascends and descends with the climber.

Two feet: You want your safety tether, which is anchored to your full-body harness and attached to the safety tree strap, taut when you sit in your stand. The tether should always be above your head so you don’t fall more than two feet. This greatly reduces the shock in the body if a fall happens.

Use enough climbing aids: Use enough ladder steps to go above a hang-

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on so you can climb down onto the stand's platform instead of pulling up into it.

Practice: Always practice with your gear at ground level, and become familiar on how to use it and how to use your safety equipment properly.

"You don't want the first time using the equipment to be at 4 a.m. in the pitch black," Nelson said. "You can do that on a Sunday afternoon at ground level and familiarize yourself with the equipment before you take it in the field. With that familiarity, you can also inspect equipment and make sure all your components are present and in good condition."

Replace: Expired or damaged components should always be replaced. Full-body harnesses have a five-year expiration date, and manufacturers provide expiration dates for cables, straps and other components. If any parts are frayed or damaged, replace them immediately.

Remove tree stands at the season's end: Don't leave stands sitting in the woods during the off-season. UV light, critters, moisture, tree growth, contract-

ing cold and expanding work to accelerate the deterioration of your stand. Take them down, and store them covered or indoors if possible. Then inspect all stands and take care of issues before hanging them back up for the next season.

Have a plan: "Have some way to get in touch with somebody," Hamm said. "I didn't have cell service where I was that day. I could have stayed in there half the night and nobody would have known where I was. And by that time, I probably wouldn't be alive."

Always have a communication device when hunting, and show someone on a map or drop a digital pin with your location, and text it to them in case something happens.

Don't rush: One of the most common excuses for not wearing a safety harness is that it takes too long to get on and use. No one thinks they are going to fall until it's too late. Take the few extra minutes to climb into your stand safely. That's nominal insurance when it's guarding your life and livelihood. Climbing slowly and deliberately is quieter than rush-

ing up a tree, too.

Tree stand safety has come a long way and has helped save many lives. However, it's still common to visit hunting camps throughout whitetail range and find folks who don't wear a full-body safety harness while using an elevated stand.

"There's no room for error out there," Hamm said. "And it happens really quickly, in the blink of an eye. One minute you're in the prime of your life, the next minute you're hurt or maimed for life. Some people have a close call and just brush it off. But a close call is a warning for what's to come if you keep doing stuff incorrectly."

Don't let manliness, stubbornness or whatever "ness" keep you from learning more about common-sense tree stand use. Check out <https://tmastands.com>, where you can print out safety guidelines, watch how-to videos, take online courses and more. Safety isn't an accident.



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■ In 2023, Jeb Burton is driving the Camaro SS No. 27 for the Jordan Anderson Racing team.



DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

The son of NASCAR legend Ward Burton, Jeb Burton learned the merits of going fast — really fast. He also realized his life needed the balance that hunting and land management can provide.

■ by Gordy J. Krahn

It might seem as though professional race car driving and hunting whitetails are worlds apart. But for Jeb Burton, that simply isn't true. Each provides a link to his heritage and upbringing, instilled by his father at an early age.

Growing up in Virginia, the son of NASCAR legend and 2002 Daytona 500 winner Ward Burton, Jeb Burton spent his youth splitting time at the racetrack and hunting and fishing in his home state. And hunting, to a great extent, defines who he is today — when he's not driving counterclockwise at break-neck speeds.

Burton, 30, has competed in the NASCAR Xfinity Series for the past nine seasons, and in 109 NXS starts, he's chalked up one win, 13 top-five finishes and 31 top-10 finishes. In 2023, he will join the Jordan Anderson Racing team, behind the wheel of Camaro SS No. 27. In addition to his NXS and NASCAR Cup Series starts, Burton has competed in 57 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series races, securing one win, seven top-five and 21 top-10 finishes.

Burton said he's excited for the opportunity to join the JAR Bommarito Autosport racing team for the 2023 season. "I've been watching the team they have been putting together the past few years and look forward to building a long-term relationship that will benefit us both," he said. "We have so many great partners that have stood behind me for so long, and I hope to be able to deliver them a great season this year."

You might think that Burton's NASCAR obligations would leave little time for anything else. But the race car driver is, well, driven, to pursue his life's other passion: whitetail hunting. That has evolved from spending time outdoors with friends and family to a full-blown TV show on the Sportsman Channel — Crossroads with the Burtons. The show chronicles his racing, hunting, conservation and land management lifestyle on and off the racetrack.

There's no doubt Burton has a huge year ahead of him on the racetrack and in the whitetail woods. With the NASCAR season winding up and hunting season just around the corner, we caught up with him for a chat about what drives him to excel on and off the racetrack. Listening to him talk about both, it became apparent that he has found a balance in life that works for him.

Whitetail Institute: Can you tell us about your hunting

background? How did you get into the whitetail game? Where are your home stomping grounds?

Burton: "I started hunting whitetails with my dad where I grew up in Virginia when I was around 9 years old, and I've been hunting on that property and others for the past 20 years. So I've been hunting whitetails for a long time. And I live on 115 acres where I'm working to enhance the wildlife there —

planting trees, burning, putting in food plots — and creating better habitat and better hunting opportunities."

WI: Talk about your racing career and TV show, Crossroads with the Burtons. How do you strike a balance between hunting and competition driving?

Burton: "Hunting and racing kind of go hand in hand for me. To be honest, they both take the same kind of passion and commitment. When I'm racing, I do everything I can to be the best I can be and to take care of my partners. When I'm not, I get outdoors and then tell stories about what I'm doing when I'm not at the racetrack. And that's how we came up with the name for our show, Crossroads with the Burtons."

WI: A big part of what you do with Crossroads is introducing

people to the outdoors. Is that what it's all about for you?

Burton: "It is. I just like introducing others to hunting and the outdoors. You know, I've been lucky enough to harvest some really good deer over the years, and now I get a lot of pleasure from giving back — doing it with friends and family. My dad was able to harvest a nice buck this year, and I was there to share the moment. For me, that's what it's all about."

WI: How has your celebrity status as a race car driver helped with this?

Burton: "If I wasn't racing, I don't think the show would be what it is, because it makes it a lot different from your normal hunting show. Crossroads isn't just about shooting something. It's about spending time outdoors and telling a story — about what's going on in our lives away from the racetrack. So I'm really lucky to be a race car driver and to also share what goes on behind the scenes."

WI: Talk about your philosophy regarding property management and food plots — especially when it comes to tagging mature whitetail bucks.

Burton: "We cover a lot of the different aspects of land




■ Ward and Jeb Burton love to pursue their passion for hunting, conservation and land management.

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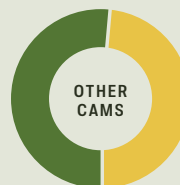
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management and hunting on Cross-roads. [We emphasize] the conservation side of giving back, because improving the habitat for wildlife is what it's really all about for us. We plant a lot of different food plots spring and fall to provide food for all kinds of animals — and to try to keep bucks on the property, to give them the nutrition they need, especially late in the season when they've lost a

lot of weight from chasing does all fall. And as far as hunting the late season, that's when you really want to be in the food plots, because that's where the deer are. We have plots planted in Whitetail Institute Imperial Clover that are pretty much available to deer and other wildlife year-round. And we also plant fall plots to try and keep deer on our property and give them something to eat and so

we are able to hunt them. We use game cameras to pattern them and figure out which deer we want to harvest.”

WI: Do you have favorite food plot plantings?

Burton: “Imperial Clover from Whitetail Institute is one. No-Plow is another. No-Plow works really well for us during the late season. It includes a variety of forages that's so important to deer late in the year and provides a ton of a variety of food to keep them on the property. It gives deer the nourishment they need, especially late in the year.”

WI: Do you have favorite hunting destinations?

Burton: “I hunt elk in Montana and also go to Arkansas every year. Those, and hunting my home grounds, are my favorite destinations.”

WI: Who are the people who have had the most influence in your life in regard to hunting?

Burton: “I would say my dad. If it weren't for him, I probably wouldn't be hunting at all. Dad introduced me to the outdoors and hunting and fishing when I was a kid, and I would do that every

PROVIDING A ONE-TWO FOOD PLOT PUNCH

It's important for hunters and land managers to do everything possible to get the most from their food plots. Part of that strategy is planting a combination of perennials and annuals that provide year-round attraction and nutrition for deer on their property. For Jeb Burton, Whitetail Institute's Imperial No-Plow and Imperial Whitetail Clover produce a one-two punch designed to keep deer fat and sassy.

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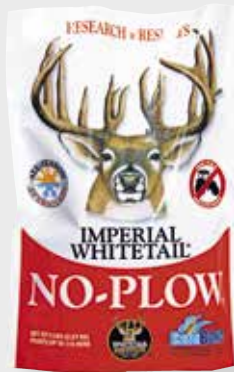
single weekend. That's what I did growing up. I'd go to the racetrack and I'd hunt — and because of him, both are a big part of who I am today."

WI: Do you target specific bucks on your property?

Burton: "I'm definitely targeting certain deer — looking for old, mature bucks. Each year, we have a hit list of the deer we've been watching through the years and target the ones that meet our criteria. If we're hunting with a kid or something like that, it's a little bit different. But us older guys, we've been there, done that, and we are a little more picky about the deer we shoot. But basically, we're managing our properties for mature bucks."

WI: Is there a buck or a hunt that stands out as your most memorable?

Burton: "I would have to say the one this year with my dad. We watched that buck for five years, and we have his sheds from the past two years. We could have killed him a hundred times during the past two years, but we waited until this year and got it all on video. We shot him over a Whitetail Institute Imperial No-Plow field and it made a real cool story."



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(Note: Jeb said details and video of the hunt will be on Crossroads with the Burtons later this year.)

WI: What's on the horizon for you? Racing plans for 2023?

Burton: "I'm actually racing with a new team this year, Jordan Anderson Racing. We have so many great partners that have stood behind me for so long, and I hope to be able to deliver them a great season this year. I'm excited to get the season started at Daytona. And with Crossroads, we're working every day to keep growing the show on the Sportsman Channel to make it as successful as we can. Our goal is to give back to the sport — that hopefully when people watch our show they learn something, and not just about hunting, but how to create and improve habitat on their own property. We have a 'Conservation Corner' on every episode with my dad, and we talk about wildlife and property management."

WI: What's your daily driver?

Burton: "Actually, I drive a Tahoe I got from a local dealership, Capital Chevrolet."





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Food plots offer so much more than just nutrition for deer and better hunting. More land managers have found purpose beyond simply harvesting venison.

■ Text and photos by *Kristopher M. Klemick*

FOOD PLOTS FOR THE SOUL



■ This image shows the author and his father in the 1980s, providing for deer before being introduced to food plots.

When the Whitetail Institute of North America was founded in 1988, the food plot we know today was nothing more than a vision to its founder, Ray Scott. At the time, little was known about deer nutrition, and even the most astute hunters had limited options for seed when it came to planting what were then referred to as greenfields for deer, save for a handful of clover varieties and cereal grains customarily grown for cattle.

Scott set out to change the way we pursued whitetails, and deer hunting has never been the same.

THE FOOD PLOT REVOLUTION IS BORN

Scott and his team devoted years and vast sums of money researching, breeding and cross-breeding the genetics of various plant varieties. As their work continued, it became clear that white-tailed deer preferred certain plants. Deer would pass over mainstay greenfield plants to indulge in the varieties researchers were developing.

In addition to superior attraction and palatability, Scott's varieties featured exceptional levels of critical nutrients that boosted body weights, antler mass and overall herd health. Researchers saw consistent ground-breaking results, and when Whitetail Institute's flagship seed, Imperial Whitetail Clover was released and began hitting the soil across the whitetail's range, hunters realized the impact Scott's food plots were having on hunting success.

A NEW PARADIGM UNFOLDS

Flash forward to today, and something else is also crystal clear: Food plots offer so much more than just food for deer and better hunting. More hunters-turned-land-managers have found purpose and satisfaction beyond simply harvesting venison. Food plots nurture a profound relationship to the land we've been entrusted with during our brief time here — a connection that reaches deeper than the roots of the seeds we sow. Knowing that we're contributing to the abundance — or in some cases, correcting a deficit — of natural resources that sustain and help wildlife flourish, there's nothing more rewarding than seeing a food plot through the various stages of planning, planting and producing.

For some people, deer hunting is an annual ritual or event — something they look forward to with the same level of excitement or anticipation as Christmas morning for a child — but often nothing more. The hunt, obviously, is no less enjoyable than that of other hunters, but food plotting is simply a tool in their kit. Plant a food plot and improve your odds of harvesting a deer.

For others, like me — and I'm betting you, too — food plots offer much more. They're more than just a labor of love. They're a way of life. We read each issue of Whitetail News cover to cover and often several times again because the plots we plant and animals we pursue are a 365-day-of-the-year passion. They offer much more than just improved habitat for whitetails and other wildlife. We plant them not for mere personal gain or an advantage during hunting season but for the satisfaction of knowing we're providing an opportunity for the animals in our neck of the woods to thrive. There's simply no better feeling than watching wildlife in a food plot you cultivated.

YEAR-ROUND BENEFITS

When the freezer is full and a seemingly all-too-brief hunting season has ended, long after the bows, rifles and smoke-poles have been put away and the woods grow quiet again, food plots continue yielding even the most intangible benefits. For example, what better way to introduce friends, family, prospective hunters and nonhunters to the sport and lifestyle we

hold dear than by welcoming them to join in the fun of planning and planting a food plot? Sharing such valuable one-on-one time with another person, young or old, can be the most engaging and rewarding experience you might ever know.

Outside of hunting season, food plots also let us spend more time in the woods observing wildlife, uncovering new experiences, exploring new ideas and contemplating the age-old question so many of us ask: "Where'd be another great spot for a plot?"

Tools such as the Institute's first-of-its-kind Plot Perfection app helps habitat managers improve plans for upcoming seasons by guiding them along the path to food plot and hunting success. The web-based tool, with easy access through any computer, tablet or smartphone, provides a holistic view of the food plot process by integrating, maps, trail cameras, seed ratios, fertilizer calculations, soil test analysis and much more. The digital experience is easy to use and an exceptional tool designed to keep things clean and organized. What's more, when control of the app is placed in the hands of today's technically savvy

youth, it can be educational and empowering, in addition to helping develop or hone decision-making and leadership skills.

The success of a food plot is ultimately at the mercy of Mother Nature, and try as we might even after a lifetime of learning to correctly do all the steps that lead to a lush, bountiful food source, things don't always go as planned. I have noticed, though, she tends to smile on those who embrace the challenge of doing more for wildlife beyond simply investing in a filled tag.

AND LIFELONG LESSONS

Though food plots pull at our purse strings, it's often the heart strings that are tugged most. Before you know it, a young hunter's time in the woods with a father and uncle opening a new plot quickly matures into the next generation of habitat managers eager to invest the time, energy and money into improving what will someday be entrusted to them. Simply put, food plots nourish the soul.



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WHAT A TREE NEEDS

Creating and keeping good timber stands isn't as simple as it seems. Ensure that your wildlife tree plantings have the necessities to survive and thrive.

■ by Josh Honeycutt

Trees serve vital roles in healthy whitetail habitat settings. Of course, trees have critical areas of life, including flowers, fruits, leaves, limbs, roots, stems, seeds and trunks. Making sure your trees are healthy within each area is crucial to planting, growing and maintaining quality stands of timber. Here are some things trees need.

STRONG ROOT SYSTEMS

Like other plants, trees gather and create food via photosynthesis, a process using energy derived from carbon dioxide, sunlight and water, which then converts into sugars. Water is carried up through the roots, and for a tree to thrive, it needs a strong root system. The larger and stronger the root system, the larger a canopy and greater mast production it can support.

So, land managers must do what they can to ensure a strong, healthy root system. Don't just look at the surface. Do what's possible to improve conditions above and below ground level.

ROOM TO THRIVE

A tree needs room for several things to grow. In addition to the root system, the shoots, leaves and trunk need space. Shoots emerge from the branches, develop buds and eventually flourish as leaves. After the leaves open, a new auxiliary bud is formed, and it often grows into new branches. This is the process through which canopies spread, and they need plenty of open space to do so.

Because of that, and so root systems don't compete, it's crucial to give trees enough room to grow. That permits plenty of space for emerging trees to establish, develop and thrive. Then, eventually, it will be a valuable resource for wildlife.

OPTIMIZED PLANNING

Every tree species is different, and each has specific site condition needs. There are many things to remember before planting new or promoting existing trees. In knowing what a tree species needs, the planning phase is crucial.



■ Trees that produce mast crops for wildlife or serve other purposes should be given priority when managing lands for hunting.

First are site considerations. As mentioned, a tree must have plenty of space above and below ground. It also needs adequate drainage, good soil pH, minimal disease threats, plenty of sunlight, proper soil type, water availability and weather compatibility. These are important boxes to check.

After site considerations, look at the specific concerns of each tree species. These include hardiness, heat tolerance, drought tolerance, growth rate, insect resistance, maturity size and more. And when selecting saplings at a nursery, remember certain factors, including selecting healthy trees without discolored bark, wilted leaves or insect concerns. Also, the trunk should properly taper upward, its

branches should be evenly spaced and its root system should be good.

PROPER PLANTING TECHNIQUES

A tree must be planted properly. Planting trees in fall is best practice, as it lets them develop root systems before dry, hot weather.

Site selection is important, too. The best areas to plant trees are in direct sunlight. Freshly planted saplings need full sunlight. Also, think about how you want deer and other wildlife to use and maneuver the property. Place trees along lines of movement (bed-to-feed travel patterns) in areas you can also hunt strategically.

When you've chosen a site, dig a hole

“Land managers must do what they can to ensure trees have strong, healthy root systems. Don't just look at the surface.”

about twice the diameter of the root ball. Remove trees and vegetation that compete with the performance of planted trees. Properly prepare the root ball for planting (this varies based on tree size and packaging type).

Then, set the tree in the hole, and make sure the depth is correct. The trunk flare should be visible just above ground level. After that's done, backfill around the tree with the original soil. There's no need to add additional soil or nutrients at that time. Placing mulch around the perimeter can help, but don't pack it around the trunk itself.

Use tree tubes or fencing to prevent animals from browsing down saplings or otherwise damaging them. Provide plenty of water, especially throughout the first year after planting, and during warmer, dryer spells. Refrain from fertilizing planted trees until 12 months or later after planting.

QUALITY MAINTENANCE

Trees are long-term projects that aren't planted-and-done tasks. And they aren't

■ Most mature trees can easily withstand browsing pressure, but younger ones often cannot.



simple to keep alive. It's good to keep an eye on them, especially during the first few years of life. Trees need routine checkups. Keep an eye out for browse damage, insect invasion, lack of water, stunted growth and more. Remedy problems as needed. Overall, trees should be a percentage of every landown-

er's management plan. Consider planting them as part of a property's food source plan, but always remember what your trees need.



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IMPERIAL WHITETAIL CLOVER:

WHAT SETS IT APART





This clover variety has long been the standard by which all other food plot forages are measured. That's no accident, and the variety's success lies in its origins and continued development.

■ by Joyce Allison Tredaway, Ph.D.

Thirty years ago, when I sat in Forage Production class at Auburn University, I never dreamed I would be writing an article about my professor and the clover variety he was discussing. As I sat in class, he discussed a new venture he had been working on, in which he had searched for the ideal clover traits for white-tailed deer and started breeding those traits with other clover varieties to find the ideal whitetail clover. If you have read Whitetail News, you've seen articles about my professor, Dr. Wiley C. Johnson, the clover breeder who searched for the ideal clover characteristics for white-tailed deer and bred the first Imperial Whitetail Clover.

To understand the impact Imperial Whitetail Clover has had on deer hunting, it's important to know the differences between the types of white clover. White

clovers are distinct clover species and feature several types, including ladino and intermediates. Ladino white clovers have larger leaves, bloom later and grow more upright than intermediate clover types. When fertility and pH levels are optimized and managed well, ladino clovers are also more productive. Intermediate-type white clovers possess many stolons (above-ground stems), therefore producing more stems than leaves.

Dr. Johnson started with the established public variety Regal, a ladino-type white clover he released in the 1960s, and then began individual plant selections looking for growth characteristics desirable for food plots. He also collected seeds from various clover breeding programs (germplasm collections) across the United States and included those lines as sources of desirable traits, which also added genetic

diversity to the breeding program. Using traditional plant breeding methods, characteristics desirable for food plots were systematically added into established ladino clover varieties, which led to the first generation of Imperial Whitetail Clover.

The book *Quality Food Plots: Your Guide to Better Deer and Better Deer Hunting*, by the Quality Deer Management Association, includes this statement in the introduction: "The birth of the nationwide commercial food plot industry unquestionably began in 1988 with the launch of Imperial Whitetail Clover by the Whitetail Institute." Imperial Whitetail Clover is consistently rated at the top in customer reviews for one reason: It's the standard by which all other clovers are measured.

Whitetail Institute uses the phrase Research = Results, which can be shown in the products the company offers. Dr. John-

son continued to improve Imperial White-tail clover throughout the years. However, the story doesn't end with him. Just like consumer products that are continually improved, Imperial Whitetail Clover has been improved. To see the difference between Imperial Whitetail Clover and the competition, you must look at the breeding program — where it began and where it has evolved since.

After Dr. Johnson died in 2006, Dr. Wayne Hanna was hired and took the breeding program to new heights by scouring the eastern and central parts of the country for individual ladino clover plants of documented longevity that also had additional desired growth attributes to further improve Imperial Whitetail Clover. Hanna, professor emeritus of the University of Georgia, is a retired research geneticist and breeder with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He is also in the Agricultural Research Service Hall of Fame and Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame for his impact on agriculture as a plant breeder.

Hanna's breeding program sought to increase pest resistance, drought resistance, deer matter yield and seed yield. In addition,

ideal varieties would be able to thrive in extreme cold climates as well as mild, warmer climates. The result was a clover bred for white-tailed deer that promotes antler, muscle and bone growth. White clover germplasm was collected from 16 states and more than 150 locations. Selections of the clover varieties were made based on vigor (height and width), plant quality, pest resistance, drought tolerance and seed head production. Larger-leaf ladino-type white clovers were intentionally selected rather than intermediate-type white clovers, which have smaller leaflets. In 2009, large populations of nine varieties were planted, and the first of the new Imperial White Clover cultivars were derived.

Selections continued based on various criteria, and in 2014, four Imperial White Clover cultivar populations were developed for seed increase. The criteria to increase the population was based on improved seed yields and improved varieties. Researchers sought qualities such as root development, drought resistance, deer preference and larger leaves to continue to improve the variety. This is the current Imperial Whitetail Clover.

Imperial White Clover works for deer hunters for many reasons. First, it was specifically bred for the characteristics that would attract deer. It has a high protein content for antler growth, muscle mass and bone growth. It thrives in extreme cold and warm climates. It features large leaves, which deer prefer to consume — a trait that differs from forage-type white clovers. Also, it can be reseeded to ensure a good stand, which lets it withstand weeds, grazing and mowing.

Whitetail Institute's clover breeding program did not stop with the first generation of Imperial Whitetail Clover. Its plant breeders continued improving the product by seeking new sources of genetic material that improved the variety and broadened its genetic diversity. Whitetail Institute's clover breeding program and its professionally trained plant breeders allowed Imperial Whitetail Clover to remain the gold standard of food plot forages.



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IMPACT:

A TIMELY PRODUCT WITH BIG RESULTS

This sprayable soil additive lets you cut immediate fertilizer costs in half and provides an immediate boost to soil nutrients.

■ by *Whitetail Institute Staff*

Whitetail Institute's Impact is a useful new tool that opens new opportunities to maximize food performance and save money. It lets you boost soil pH immediately and cut short-term fertilizer costs. It's also an especially timely product, with fertilizer costs going through the roof.

It's no secret that fertilizer costs have skyrocketed during the past year or two. Unfortunately, there seems to be little chance they'll decrease this year. Should that push you to cut corners on fertilizing your food plots? Even as recently as a year or two ago, doing so might have made financial sense. Some folks had to decide whether to fully lime and fertilize or only partially do so and live with less-than-optimum food plot performance. Today, though, you have another option — one that lets you avoid or postpone part of the cost of fertilizer and still make sure your planting has the nutrients it needs. That product is Impact.

Impact is a sprayable soil additive that does two things. First, it provides a short-duration increase in soil pH of 68 percent compared to lime (calcium carbonate equivalent). One application is sufficient to grow most annual forages. A second application might benefit perennials. That, of course, depends on doing a laboratory soil test first to determine what your soil pH is. Second, Impact provides immediately available phosphorous and potassium.

Impact provides an immediate boost to soil pH. It can be used instead of lime to increase soil pH. The effect on soil pH won't be as great as it would be with lime, but again, it's immediate, and that's one reason Impact is such a superb tool for last minute-food plots. It can also be used in addition to lime to overcome one shortcoming: Even if you work lime into the soil, which lets it work as quickly as possible, it still takes a while for soil pH to increase. By liming and then spraying with Impact, you can bring soil pH up quickly, and the dry lime application to the soil will help keep it up for a much longer term.

Don't be fooled by calcium chloride. Some products being advertised as raising soil pH won't work. You can tell those by looking for a product's ingredient list to see if it's calcium chloride. Calcium chloride does not raise soil pH — period. If you read the advertising of some calcium chloride products, you can spot the trick. It's usually in one sentence in a long article that says the reason lime is added to the soil is to raise calcium. That is not true. The purpose for adding lime is to raise soil pH, not increase calcium. If your intention is to increase soil pH, use Impact, not calcium chloride.

Because Impact provides an immediate boost to soil nutrients, it gives you the option to cut the amount of fertilizer recommended in half. By spraying Impact and putting out half the fertilizer called for in your soil test report, you can give your food plot all the nutrition it needs and postpone purchasing larger amounts of standard fertilizer until prices are more reasonable.



IMPACT SOIL AMENDMENT

- Create high-yielding nutritious food plots in areas anywhere bulk or pellet lime is not an option.
- Depending on soil type and rainfall amounts, Impact can improve forage quality and growth for three to five months with one application. It's great for annual plantings. Perennial plots could need two or three applications.



TRADITION

Memories and stories from deer camps gone by explain why we are the hunters we are.

■ Text and photos by *Kristopher M. Klemick*

There's something to be said about tradition. Whether it's the desire to celebrate and honor the past or simply hold onto the memories and nostalgia of our youth, the behaviors and symbolic actions we take each year leave an indelible mark on our lives, inherited from years past and generations before. But in the world of deer hunting, tradition cuts deeper and is undoubtedly rooted in our DNA. Our hunting culture is built upon decades of dyed-in-the-wool rituals that have molded us into the hunters we've become and will continue affecting generations that follow.

THE UNIQUE TAILS OF TRADITION

In my home state of Pennsylvania, the first day of rifle deer season has always been an undeclared state holiday. Schools are closed, local businesses are shuttered and nary a boss dare deny a time-off request for opening day. As a child, I always looked forward to the after-Thanksgiving dinner festivities at my grandparent's house, as it marked the official kick-off to something that rivaled in excitement to Christmas morning — the magical first day of buck season, held the Monday after Thanksgiving. While mom, gram and my aunts plotted their Black Friday shopping strategy, my dad, uncles, grandfather and their close friends would go over our game plans.

Pop was the plant manager at the Pepsi bottling plant in town, so a truckload (no joke) of drinks were already in the bed of someone's truck, with just enough room for a keg or two. Everyone would meet early at Gram and Pop's Friday morning

to cover last-minute details before setting out to accomplish their supply responsibilities: picking up meats, cheeses, potatoes, onions, cakes, pies and a mountain of snack food. Oh, and lest we forget the paper goods (Read: toilet paper. Lots of toilet paper.)

My grandfather loved buck season. It was his second favorite holiday, and when I was old enough to join my father in the stand at age 12, I realized why he loved it so. More than six decades before, he and a couple of his closest friends decided they'd contribute money to a jar when they met each week at the local VFW until they saved enough to buy our little slice of heaven in Tioga County, Pennsylvania. The almost-250-acre property originally included an old farmhouse with busted windows and doors, where almost two-dozen men would call home during the two-week season.

Chronically contagious laughter — the kind that makes your sides hurt — tore through the rickety farmhouse — along with stiff northwest winds — as stories of past seasons were shared. The tale of a guy falling out one of the house's second-story broken windows late one night is still told today. Everyone heard a thud outside, and then moments later, in walked the guy covered in snow, and everyone roared with laughter when they realized just what had happened. Soon afterward, the guys built the new camp, which stands today.

A roaring fire in the wood stove consistently threw 80-degree heat up from the basement as outside temperatures struggled in the single digits, yet windows were still always open, just like the back door, as friends would stop by with





■ The author's oldest son was deeply immersed in every experience during his first year at deer camp and couldn't wait to help drag his uncle's buck out of the woods.



bologna and cheese platters to laugh and carry on. Upstairs, the camp cook would have a massive spread of food laid out. Football played on one of the few channels we could get atop the mountain, and you were lucky if you could find a seat anywhere. Four couches, just as many recliners and a dining table that seats 30 were always taken. In the basement, it was much the same. The bar was always stocked, beer flowed freely through the taps on the wall and the huge poker table was constantly alive. I remember earning quarters for every drink run I was sent on. To this day, buck season is an experience like none other.

CARRYING THE LEGACY

Sons and grandsons of the original founding fathers now lead our fourth generation to the woods, and though our numbers have declined, our excitement for each new year and its traditions remains stronger than ever. More than 30 years and counting, our food plots continue to be planted in Whitetail Institute's flagship Imperial Whitetail Clover. Blood lines on the cheeks continue to celebrate and honor a new hunter's first deer, many of which were taken from those plots. And tenderloins from the day's hunt are triumphantly cooked and enjoyed the evening of the harvest.

As has been done since the first members walked through the door, everyone signs the book. Its volumes offer a rich history from a cherished but distant past. Hunters also still sign up for

■ The truck at the author's camp has been involved in more memorable, wildly unbelievable and hilarious hunting stories than it has miles on the odometer. Here, the author's brother, Joel, left, uncle Mark, right, and leader and senior member John, center, reminisce about the time a cab full of hunters, replete with a harvested doe and two other hunters, almost bounced out of the bed as the truck flew down the mile-long logging road in the dark with no headlights, brakes or power steering.

the buck pool, place their money in the jar and hope for the best while crossing their fingers they don't have the misfortune of missing a buck.

"I'll never forget it," said John, our senior member, recalling his experience as a young child. "I got back to camp one night and told everyone that I missed a buck earlier in the day. Big mistake. Didn't they go and cut the tail right off my brand-new flannel shirt. Mom wasn't happy with Dad when we got home. For years, that shirt tail was tied to the banister in the old farmhouse. And mine wasn't the only one."

Although we don't terrorize youngsters with that practice today, you can bet they know the story and share the same laughs as those who experienced it firsthand and continue to tell it. It's those long-established rituals and experiences we associate with hunting season that makes it such a special part of our lives, and why it will continue to play an important role instilling and carrying the memories and legacy for generations.

As we look forward to each new season's campfires and camaraderie, we must also endeavor to create new traditions. In fact, Pennsylvania challenged its hunters to do that in 2019, when the state's opening day was changed for the first time since 1963 from the Monday

after Thanksgiving to the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Although the relatively rushed transition from a dining room turkey table to the deer stand affects many aspects of the season, opportunities to create new memories, new experiences and new traditions still abound.

HONORING THE PAST

The walls of any camp, club or hunting family are never the same. Each has its unique story to tell, but we share the same common thread that weaves how hunting connects us and its traditions carry us. Some find comfort and honor the past by hunting from the same tree stand or stump their father or grandfather hunted from. I could always look through the woods from my stand and see my grandfather sitting in his. We'd give a careful wave anytime we'd catch each other while glassing the woods. Though he loved buck season, my grandfather held Christmas at the top of his list, because it brought the family together. And although he passed in 2008 at daybreak Christmas morning, I visit Gram and Pop's grave each year on the way to camp Friday morning to check in, just like we always did. Tradition would not have it any other way.





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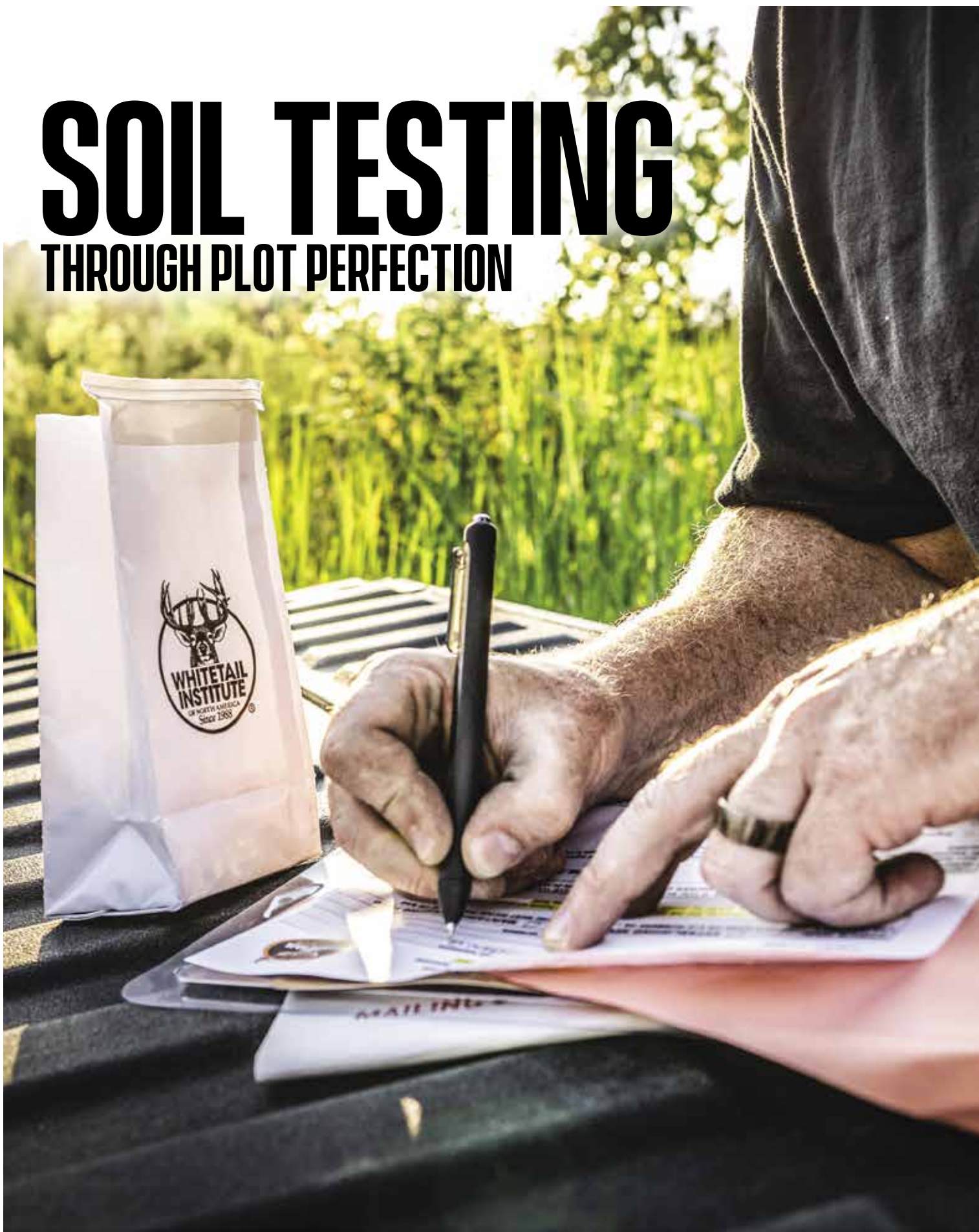


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SOIL TESTING

THROUGH PLOT PERFECTION





This unique feature will change the way you manage food plots.

■ by *Whitetail Institute Staff*

With Plot Perfection, Whitetail Institute's new food plotting app, soil testing has become more streamlined. The app is a one-stop shop for all your food plotting needs, including full integration with Whitetail Institute Laboratories for a smooth transition from field to app.

The process is simple: Collect your soil samples, log in to your Plot Perfection account, click the Soil Test tab, follow the Submit a Soil Test link and fill out the information for the field you're testing. When that's complete, Plot Perfection will download a submittal form to your computer. Print the submittal form and mail it with your soil the same way you have for years with our soil testing services. When the lab receives the soil, you will get an email acknowledging the staff has received it. The next email will tell you the lab has completed the testing, and the results will automatically be downloaded into your Plot Perfection account.

The best part is that Plot Perfection will automatically calculate all your fertilizer and lime needs as required by your soil test. You can add any fertilizer you find locally into the equation, and the app will tell you how much you need. For example, if the report calls for 13-13-13 but you can only find 19-19-19, Plot Perfection will calculate the amount of 19-19-19 you need to substitute for the 13-13-13. If you want to change the crop for which you tested, you do that inside your app, and it will recalculate recommendations for the new crop. That ability is the first of its kind in the food plotting world.

Having your soil test history tied to your plot, along with the history of everything you have done to that plot, will take the guesswork out of the process. Among all the benefits of Plot Perfection, that's a premium feature that will change your food plotting and database building like never before.

Contact Whitetail Institute at (800) 688-3030 with questions about soil testing or Plot Perfection. Our staffers are happy to walk you through the process and look forward to sharing this one-of-a-kind feature with food plotters.

■ The Plot Perfection app will automatically calculate your fertilizer and lime needs as required by your soil test.





DREW GILKERSON | TENNESSEE



■ Noah's early-December buck, left, headed toward a group of does in a Destination plot. His Christmas buck, above, followed eight does into an Imperial Alfa-Rack field.

YOUNG DEAD-EYE

■ It would be an understatement to say this past year was a good one in the outdoors for my grandson Noah. I'm no different than a lot of grandparents when it comes to bragging about my grandchildren, but I'm the proudest grandpa in the world. No one thinks of an 11-year-old as being a seasoned outdoorsman, but Noah's ability to absorb instructions, retain knowledge and execute shots at the range or in ground blinds has been phenomenal.

From 2017 through 2021, Noah has harvested five bucks in five years with me; four with a crossbow and one with a rifle. We practiced shooting with Noah before and during those years, and he's a natural, whether lining up on a target or animal. We've also tried getting on turkeys during those years, too, but it never happened until 2022. He started that year by taking his first gobbler during our opening day of turkey season with a Benelli M2 20-gauge. It

was a great first bird, and it sported 1.25-inch spurs and a 9-inch beard, and weighed 20 pounds. I'm not sure if it was because that was his first bird or because we never had luck in previous years,

or a combination, but I've never seen him so excited after pulling the trigger. It was one of those events where he couldn't express words because the excitement level of adrenaline peaked. He could only laugh while trying to talk, and only giggled words came out at first. We were hunting over an Imperial Alfa-Rack food plot, and at the time of this turkey hunt, we had no idea what was to come during deer season.

Noah again proved his prowess in October and took his first doe with a crossbow in the Alfa-Rack plot where he killed his turkey. He followed it with another doe the day after Thanksgiving in a Destination plot. Now that he had taken two does, he was ready for his first buck of the year. We had a few close encounters in November, but the

bucks were pushing does, and we couldn't get a shot.

In early December, we had a hard freeze, and deer were moving everywhere at daybreak. We were bundled up in our ground blind overlooking the Destination plot, and as the sun began to rise, we saw a nice 8-point feeding with a doe he was tending to our east in an Alfa-Rack plot. Our Alfa-Rack and Destination plots aren't too far from each other, but because of the blind location, there are no shooting opportunities, and the buck and doe moved out of sight. Noah experienced the empty feeling we all get when you watch a deer you want to shoot walk in the other direction and disappear. He never said anything, but I believe he was thinking his Pa-Pa made a mistake by choosing the wrong food plot to hunt that morning. Those are great learning experiences.

During the first hour of daylight, we had watched several does and fawns at our place and our neighbor's farm, but we hadn't seen any more bucks. However, just as quickly as the 8-point left earlier that morning, he reappeared to the north on my neighbor's farm. A group of does was feeding at the Destination plot in front of us, and the rutting buck headed directly to them. Noah sent the Federal .270 out of the Thompson-Center Pro Hunter, severing the deer's heart in half at 140 yards. It was an incredible shot followed by true jubilation. The combined cold and excitement of the hunt had Noah shaking and his teeth chattering, but the look of pride on his face was what I remember most. A celebration hug and a brief recovery walking through the Destination plot warmed us that morning.

Although it was cold at the beginning of December, it turned downright bitter before, during and after Christmas. It's times like those I'm thankful for Whitetail Institute food plots. My plots were attracting deer at all times of day. The ground was covered with snow, and the earth was frozen, but deer had food

during that tough time. There was only a buck I wanted to shoot this past season — a wide-racked 6-point. I was using a Bear longbow and dedicated my hunts to that weapon for that deer. Thankfully, I was unsuccessful. With our family showing up at about noon on Christmas day we had Christmas dinner and exchanged gifts, and then had the Christmas day hunt at our place. It was so cold that no one wanted to go, and I didn't think Noah would be up for it. However, I told him about all the deer feeding in the plots and how they were coming in early, so if we got lucky, it would probably happen fast. I had no idea if that would happen, but I hoped it would.



■ Noah's first turkey, taken off an Imperial Alfa-Rack plot, had 1.25-inch spurs and a 9-inch beard.

As if it were designed, we hadn't been in the ground blind by the Imperial Alfa-Rack plot for 10 minutes when eight does come in the plot from a bedding area in an adjacent woodlot, and they began feeding 80 yards from us. A couple of minutes later, I spotted a buck crossing another field heading toward the does. I thought it was an 8-pointer I had told Noah earlier he couldn't shoot because the deer needed another year. But it turned out to be the buck I had pursued with my bow.

As the deer approached, Noah said he was getting nervous because the rack was so wide, and he was concerned about making the shot because he was shaking. We bowed our heads and said a prayer, asking for a clean shot or a clean miss. Our prayers for a clean shot were answered. When the buck turned broadside about 60 yards away, Noah fired, and the buck never cleared the plot. The wind chill was below zero, and we were cold, but we had one more ground-blind celebration with high fives and hugs to end Noah's season.

Noah just turned 12, and he's following in my footsteps and participating in the great outdoors, catching fish, harvesting animals and providing meals for his family. He loves God, his parents, soccer, basketball, football and video games. He's ahead of his age with his outdoor knowledge and skill and continues to ask questions and learn. Noah understands the importance of preparing food plots, and he helps us in every aspect of food plotting. He knows why we harvest animals and, more important, he knows it's not about the number of kills or the size of the rack (although I can't fault him for wanting to shoot the biggest buck). We've taught him the trophy is the experience of all the things that go into each hunt, and I'm so thankful he understands.



PATRICK FUNK | NEW YORK

■ I got it done last night in Hobart, New York, sitting in my blind on a 4/5-acre Fusion plot.

I used my decoy the past three times I went out. The first time, I had a buck and doe come in, and they were infatuated with the decoy. It got to be too late by the time the buck was close enough for a shot, so I tried it again this past night. The same situation occurred, except the buck came in a little sooner. A couple of times, the buck caught some movement in my blind as I was trying to range or glass, but as soon as I sat still for a second, he turned 100 percent of his attention to the decoy. The buck came in to 25 yards and offered a perfect broadside shot. He kind of wheeled a little at the shot, and I ended up hitting him a little farther back, but I still believed it to be a good hit.

I got out of my blind and went to check the arrow, and I saw the fletching covered in dark red blood, so I felt pretty good. I never even picked it up, because a local tracker had asked me a while ago to give him a call if I hit a good one. He has a puppy he's getting trained, and he lives pretty close. I thought the situation was just what he wanted. I walked to where the deer went in the woods just to confirm the location. Then I called Jarred, the tracker, and he was on his way.

I put the decoy away, got my stuff together, went to the house to change out of my hunting clothes and called my buddy, because he wanted to help out. His fiancé and he had never seen a dog work and wanted to watch. A while later, everyone showed up, and we went to the field where I hit the buck. When that four-legged tracking machine picked up the scent, he went from being a playful puppy to work mode, and he was off. Jarred kept hollering back to us to tell us when we could come up. He does that because he doesn't want you stepping in the blood and spreading it all over, because that could mess up the dog if you had to reset it. After probably five minutes, I heard Jarred yelling, "Good boy, get him Ted." That's when I knew.

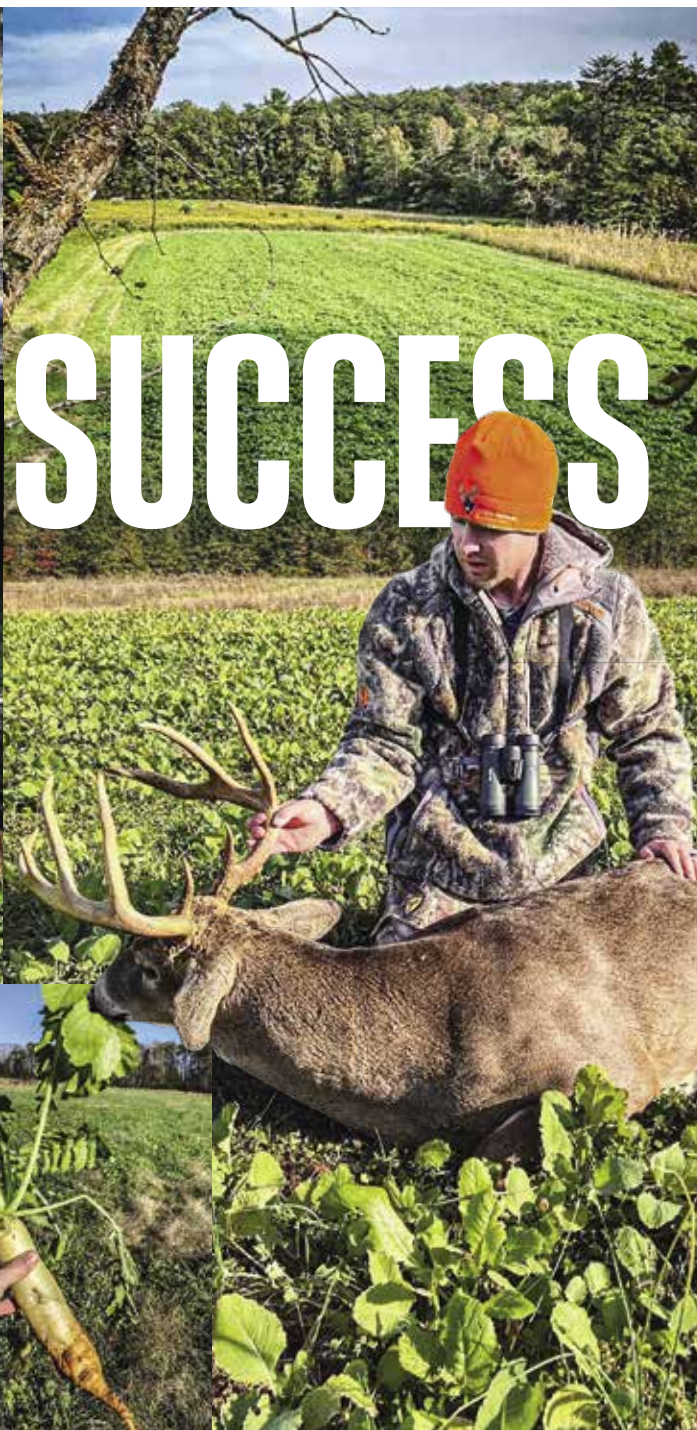
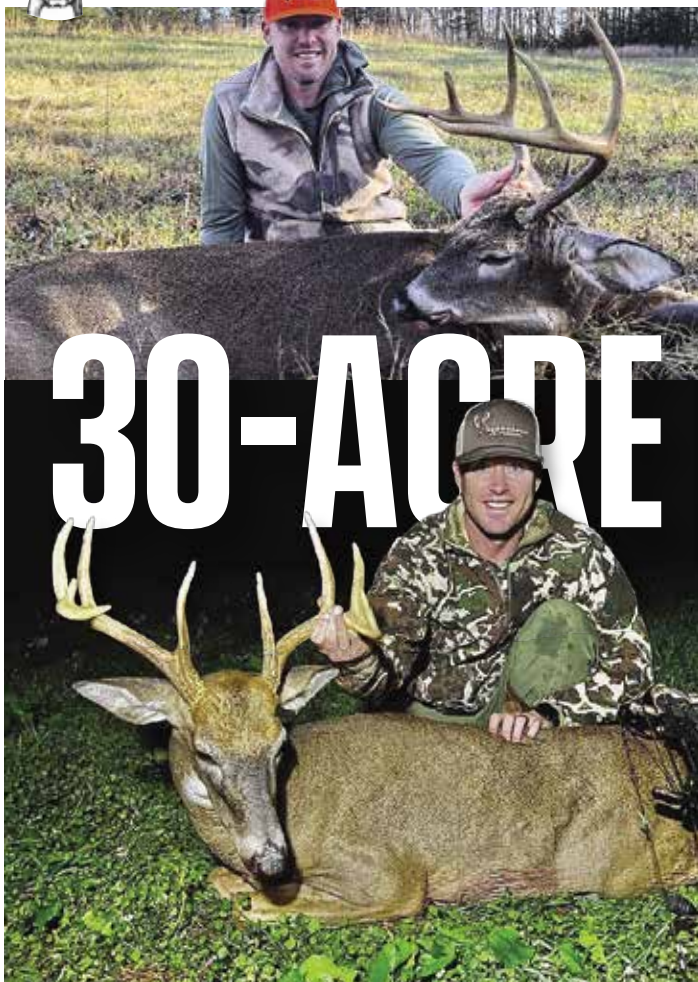
The buck had gone about 120 to 150 yards and died, shot right through the liver. I got him field-dressed, took him to my buddy's place and then got him to his ultimate destination — my freezer. I wanted to thank everyone for the help and thank Jarred for bringing Ted to make quick work of something that would have taken longer. Apparently, that was his first job in the dark, but you would have never known it.

Again, I can't thank Whitetail Institute enough, not only for putting out a great product, but your customer service is amazing. You guys are always on point with advice and willing to talk and listen. I greatly appreciate everything you guys have helped me accomplish. Deer have been hammering the plot lately, and I hope I get a slammer to come through during rifle season. One thing's for sure: If they are in the area, they're definitely stopping by the Fusion buffet.





30-ACRE SUCCESS



JORDAN JESSUP | MICHIGAN

■ The past four seasons, I've created a food source using White-tail Institute products, and it continues to produce results. I started with clover in Spring 2019 to establish a spring and summer food source. In August of that year, I used my 8-foot disc to create miniature rows in the clover. I did not turn or destroy the clover on purpose, because it was a great early-season attractant, and it also helped provide the right amount of cover for the blend of fall seeds to germinate. The micro rows created by the discs allow the seed to wash into a line while making good seed-to-soil contact. I mixed a combination of Beets and Greens, Tall

Tine Tubers and Winter-Greens with some cereal rye. Then with a hand spreader, I applied it to the clover plot.

This food plot is 1 acre and rests on a 30-acre property I hunt. I have repeated this process every fall for the past several years. The rye seeds out in spring, and I mow it during late summer. The clover always has adequate moisture and shade because of the mulching rye layer.

The number of deer and turkeys that have made this plot a core area has been awesome. I have had some unreal hunts — all on a very small property.



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Patience and a good shot let 13-year-old Daniel Marshall claim a great buck.

ALABAMA SUCCESS

DANIEL MARSHALL | ALABAMA

■ Getting your first deer of the season is always memorable. When that deer is a 10-pointer shot while hunting with your grandfather, the event is even more noteworthy.

In late November 2022, Daniel Marshall, 13, was hunting during the firearms season with his grandfather Tra Cosby on family land in Elmore County, Alabama.

"We watched a number of deer come in, including some smaller bucks," Cosby said. "When this one came out right before dark, it was one we agreed would be a good deer to shoot. We had to watch the deer come from about 250 yards to 150 before we felt comfortable making the shot." Daniel steadied his .308 and fired. The deer fell on the spot.

"We were both very excited, especially to watch it drop in its tracks," Cosby said. "He's a good young hunter. Early in the season, trying to get your first deer of the year, it was a great feeling to make a quick kill on a nice buck. Neither of us will forget it."

Daniel killed another 10-pointer during January 2023 while hunting with his father. And he also scored a turkey during Spring 2023.

"He loves the outdoors and hunting," Cosby said. "He'll hunt any time someone will take him."



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

**PLEASE SCAN HERE AND
TAKE A QUICK SURVEY**

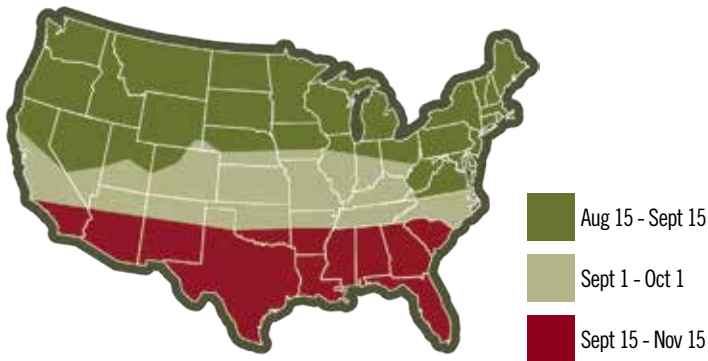
• <https://whitetailinstitute.com/field-tester-survey/>

FOOD PLOT PLANTING DATES...



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

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

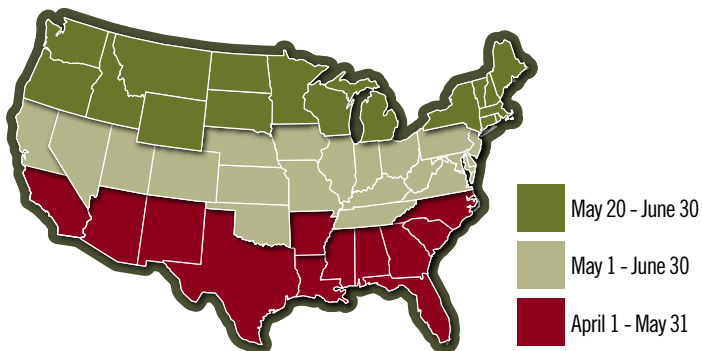


PLANTING DATES FOR WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

Use the map above 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 VISION, PURE ATTRACTION, SECRET SPOT, WINTER PEAS, BOWSTAND, AND DESTINATION

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



PLANTING DATES FOR POWERPLANT, REVIVE CONCEAL, SUNN HEMP AND TURKEY SELECT

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

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

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



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\$29.97

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
CLOVER



36 LBS.-4.5-ACRE
PLANTING

\$249.99 + tax
Suggested Retail \$279.96
— (36 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail Clover
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$42.98

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
ALFA-
RACK PLUS



33LBS.-2.5-ACRE
PLANTING

\$246.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$289.96
— (33 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail Alfa-Rack Plus
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$20.01

CONCEAL



\$119.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$139.99
— (28 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail Conceal
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$42.98

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
EXTREME



46 LBS.-2-ACRE
PLANTING
\$246.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$289.96
— (46 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail EXTREME
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$5.02

POWERPLANT



\$114.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$120.00
— (50 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail PowerPlant
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$42.97

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
FUSION



27.75 LBS.-4.5-ACRES
PLANTING
\$246.99 + tax
Suggested Retail \$289.96
— (27.75 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail Fusion
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$29.98

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
WINTER-
GREENS



24 LBS.-4-ACRE
PLANTING

\$189.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$219.96
— (24 lb.) quantities of Imperial
Whitetail Winter-Greens
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$29.98

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
PURE
ATTRACTION



39 LBS.-.75-ACRE
PLANTING
\$84.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$89.97
— (39 lb.) quantities of
Imperial Whitetail Pure Attraction
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$29.98

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
BEETS &
GREENS



24 LBS.-4-ACRE
PLANTING

\$189.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$219.96
— (24 lb.) quantities of Imperial
Whitetail Beets & Greens
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$39.95

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
"CHIC"
MAGNET



9 LBS.-3-ACRE
PLANTING
\$99.99 + tax
Suggested Retail \$139.94
— (9 lb.) quantities of
Imperial Whitetail "Chic" Magnet
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$34.98

IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
TALL TINE
TUBERS



24 LBS.-4-ACRE
PLANTING
\$164.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$199.96
— (24 lb.) quantities of
Imperial Whitetail Tall Tine Tubers
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE
\$20.00


IMPERIAL
WHITETAIL
OATS
PLUS



45 LBS.-1/2-ACRE
PLANTING
\$60.00 + tax
Suggested Retail \$79.98
— (45 lb.) quantities
of Imperial Whitetail OATS Plus
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE \$19.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL NO-PLOW



36 LBS.-2-ACRE PLANTING

\$119.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$154.96
— (36 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail No-Plow
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$16.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL KRAZE



\$42.98 (4) pak
Suggested Retail \$52.99
\$59.99 (6) pak
Suggested Retail \$75.99
+ tax
— (4) 5lb bags @ \$42.98
— (6) 5lb bags @ \$59.99
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE \$19.98

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL WINTER PEAS PLUS



44 LBS.-1-ACRE PLANTING

\$129.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$149.96
— (44 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Winter-Peas Plus
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$11.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL APPLE OBSESSION



\$49.96 (4) pak
Suggested Retail \$57.96
\$69.96 (6) pak
Suggested Retail \$80.96
+ tax
— (4) 5lb bags @ \$49.96
— (6) 5lb bags @ \$69.96
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE \$15.00

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL RAVISH RADISH



10 LBS.-1-ACRE PLANTING

\$79.96 + tax
Suggested Retail \$94.96
— (10 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Ravish Radish
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$20.01

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL IMPACT SOIL AMENDMENT



• 8.5LBS - .5 ACRES
• 25.5LBS - 1.5 ACRES

\$59.99 (8.5lbs)
Suggested Retail \$80.00
\$149.94 (25.5lbs)
Suggested Retail \$169.95 + tax
— (8.5lbs) of Impact \$59.99
— (25.5lbs) of Impact \$149.94
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE \$7.04

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL DESTINATION



36 LBS.-1-ACRE PLANTING

\$129.98 + tax
Suggested Retail \$137.02
— (36 lb.) quantities of Imperial Whitetail Destination
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$13.00

ARREST MAX HERBICIDE



• 1 PINT-1 ACRE
• 1/2 GALLON-4 ACRES

\$56.99 (1 pint)
Suggested Retail \$69.99
\$159.99 (1/2 gallon)
Suggested Retail \$169.00 + tax
— pint(s) of Arrest Max Herbicide
— 1/2 gallon(s) of Arrest Max Herbicide
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$11.97

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL 30-06 BLOCK



\$34.98 (one block)
Suggested Retail \$39.95
\$57.98 (two blocks)
Suggested Retail \$69.95
+ tax
— (2) -Pak blocks @ \$57.98
— (1) -Pak blocks @ \$34.98
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$19.02

SLAY HERBICIDE



• 4 OZ.-1 ACRE
• 1 PINT-4 ACRES

\$57.98 (4 oz.-1 acre)
Suggested Retail \$72.99
\$149.98 (1 pint-4 acres)
Suggested Retail \$169.00 + tax
— 4 oz. of Slay Herbicide
— pint(s) of Slay Herbicide
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

YOU SAVE UP TO \$11.97

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL MAGNET MIX BLOCK



\$32.99 (one block)
Suggested Retail \$39.95
\$57.98 (two blocks)
Suggested Retail \$69.95
+ tax
— (2) -Pak blocks @ \$57.98
— (1) -Pak blocks @ \$32.99
TOTAL (Add 7% Sales Tax)
\$ _____

SHIP TO: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

(No PO Boxes, Cannot Ship to Canada)

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Payment: ☐ Check or Money Order enclosed

Charge to: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Discover ☐ AMEX

Credit Card: _____

Exp. Date: _____ Sec.Code: _____

Signature: _____

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BACK-40 NOTEBOOK

■ **Brian Lovett** ~ Whitetail News Senior Editor

TAKING IN THE SCENERY

Some views remind us of others,
which indicates how fortunate we've been.

The view from a stand never really changes, unless you consider its progression through the season; green and lush opening week, golden and ablaze as fall progresses, and dull and barren when winter secures its hold.

But now and then, when your eyes tire of straining for the flick of a tail or silhouette of a deer, a familiar scene from a stand might transport your mind to places and stands miles away — reminders of previous hunts in what seem like exotic destinations. Maybe that's just a symptom of long hours spent looking into the woods, or perhaps it's a mental trick that helps pass time. But whatever the reason, seemingly everyday sights can sometimes spark a flood of images.

Often, a green field or food plot starts the daydream, usually taking me back to the first time I hunted in the South — Alabama in January, to be specific. Every deer hunter has set up near a food source, of course, but that marked the first time I sat in a shooting house over a classic Southern green field. Although clear and crisp, the first morning seemed a stark contrast to the Arctic-like conditions to which I was accustomed. And when the sun warmed the landscape and the scent of pines drifted across the breeze, I knew I was worlds away from home ground.

Timber also does the trick. Some folks think all woods look the same, but any hunter knows that's not true. A slight change in geography or soil type means different trees and understory plants, many of which might seem a bit unfamiliar. Some days, while gazing into the mixed-hardwood ridges at our cabin property, I think back to woods perhaps 250 miles distant, in Wisconsin's north woods. Sure, those woods held familiar red oaks, birch and quaking aspen (or popple, as locals call them), but the latter two were far more abundant in the North than at my current hunting grounds. When you add jack pine, red

pine and remnant white pines, those big woods took on an unfamiliar hue. Those northern woods just seemed far wilder and more foreboding than the timbered ridges and small woodlots farther south.

When the snow flies, my thoughts again drift north, but farther yet. One December, I joined some friends in Upper Peninsula Michigan, between lakes Superior and Michigan, to pursue early-winter whitetails in the frozen, snow-covered deep woods. Every sit was like peering into a snow globe, with winter birds and forest critters, including fishers and pine martens, providing entertainment. That was good, because the deer didn't show. In fact, other than bumping a doe and fawn near a bait pile while heading in for lunch one day, we saw very few whitetails.

Thankfully, the winter scenery made up for it.

Of course, not every view from every stand prompts déjà vu. Some are just familiar scenes; a study in focus or a moment in time. After a while, they become so committed to memory that you can close your eyes and see every detail: each leaning tree, wrinkle in terrain and the spot where the sun will set.

They're all good views. Hunters get to witness some of the best scenes remaining on the planet — more than perhaps any other group of enthusiasts. Whether distant and strange or old and familiar, those scenes provide a unique insight into the natural world; one you can't receive from a day at the park or a jeep safari tour. They bind us to those places and the experiences we enjoy there. And if we're lucky, like when drifting off while thinking of views from our past, they'll stay with us long after deer season is finished and perhaps even when our days afield are done.



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AND OVER 30 YEARS LATER, WE CONTINUE TO LEAD**



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239 Whitetail Trail, Pintola, AL 36043

*Whitetail Institute's extensive research and development network includes deer hunters, universities, farmers and seed producers around the world allowing us to discover new and improved forages. Our research, development and testing is conducted within our system of Certified Research Stations and field testers across North America. This unique process lets us subject our forage blends to the harshest critics of all – Mother Nature, real hunters and wild, free-ranging deer all across North America.

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NEW



6X8 GAME CHANGER PLATINUM 360°

Weight:	550 lbs
Door Size:	30" Wide X 63" High
Exterior Size:	77" Wide X 100" Deep X 82" High
Interior Size:	70" Wide X 94" Deep X 80" High
Door Window:	18" Wide X 10" High
Front Window(s):	36" Wide X 14" High
Side Window(s):	25" Wide X 14" High
Corner Window(s):	10" Wide X 46" High
	36" Height from floor to bottom of horizontal windows



ON 10FT DELUXE STAND

THE NEW 6 X 8 GAME CHANGER PLATINUM 360° BLIND TAKES VISIBILITY TO THE MAX...

The Game Changer changes the way you hunt... Big enough to comfortably fit 3-4 adults, this blind is the ultimate solution to being able to scan a wide area while hunting with multiple hunters. Having more room to accommodate more helpful eyes to spot your trophy of a lifetime, the Game Changer really sets the bar high.

Combine the 46" tall vertical windows, with large oversized horizontal windows and roomy interior, and you have the ultimate blind for compound bow, crossbow or gun hunting. This combination of size and window functionality gives you plenty of room, visibility and angles to make a perfect shot when the moment of truth arrives. If there is the need to sleep in the blind to catch that big buck at first light without getting busted, the Game Changer has ample enough space to accommodate a small cot or air mattress!

FEATURES

- Made from long-lasting fiberglass
- Vertical and horizontal tempered, automotive glass windows for bow, crossbow, or gun hunting
- Closed cell foam insulated ceiling, acoustical foam covered walls for superior sound control and insulation
- 3 highly functional consoles pre-installed to help organize your hunting gear
- Built in shelves and gun holders
- Marine-carpeted foam floor liner
- Available with Deluxe 5ft, 10ft Stands and 5ft, 10ft Stairway Stands



ON 10FT STAIRWAY