

WHITETAIL News



Volume 28, No. 3
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Story On Page 5

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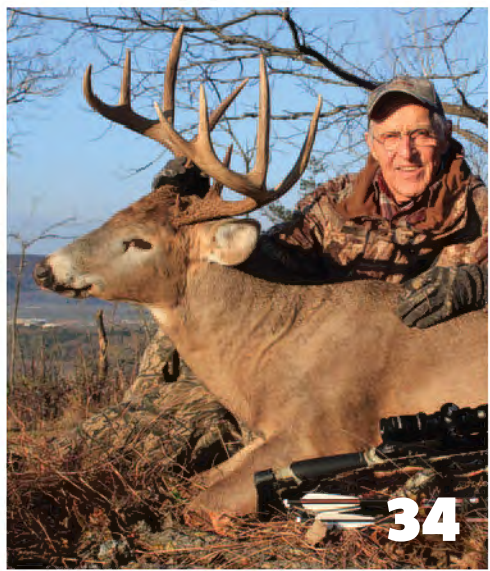
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Whitetail Institute

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A Message from RAY SCOTT

Founder of the Whitetail Institute of North America

In the beginning we were all feeling our way around uncharted territory to establish a whole new industry in food plots and deer nutrition and to introduce an entirely new concept of improving the quality of the deer we hunt and the habitat where the deer live. One thing was for sure, we were all wearing more than one hat.

2019 – Milestones and Memories

Time and memories can be funny things. While many specific events grow dim with the passage of time, the significance of others seems to actually come into better focus, and others remain clear no matter what.

With that in mind I wanted to check in with our original “pioneer team” at the Whitetail Institute to check on some of their recollections from the last 30 years.

The Institute headquarters itself is in a modest residential brick house and horse barn over the hill from my main house and lake. Little did I know when I bought the property that it would be the place where the food plot revolution was created.

I talked to my sons Steve and Wilson (Senior Advisors) William Cousins (General Manager) and John White our Senior Product Consultant.

In the beginning we were all feeling our way around uncharted territory to establish a whole new industry in food plots and deer nutrition and to introduce an entirely new concept of improving the quality of the deer we hunt and the habitat where the deer live. One thing was for sure, we were all wearing more than one hat. And even today all our staff pitch in to take phone calls for orders and to offer customer service.

We quickly realized that education was going to be a critical component of our success. We had to sell not just our products but the very concept of food plots and nutrition for deer as well as deer and land management.

And so it happened in the initial division of labor that one of the hats Wilson would wear was ensuring *Whitetail News* magazine was printed and mailed on time.

“We started with a sparse 12-page issue,” recalls Wilson. “It was printed on oversized soft newsprint with a few paid ads and lots of white space. It wasn’t prime time for sure but it had some good information in it. So I remember very clearly when we printed our first slick-page magazine. It was 72 pages with a lot of great editorial and ads. For me it represented a real leap forward for *Whitetail News* itself and our readers. We even have field testers who save every issue.”

As General Manager, William Cousins covers a lot of territory. He did tractor work on my ranch while he was in college and was graduating about the time I was starting the Institute.

“I hunted,” says William, “and had done farm work all my life and I guess Ray thought I was a natural for his new enterprise. I took a deep breath and Ray’s enthusiasm was irresistible. He is a true visionary.

“What I really remember is his advice when I got nervous about a big decision that needed to be made or about competitors and he told me ‘William, just keep moving

forward and stay focused. Never look over your shoulder. Focus.’ Wise advice from the Master and words I still call on today.”

Steve has been a dedicated deer hunter from a very early age and has played a critical and enthusiastic role in defining and preaching the benefits of food plots. He works closely with *Whitetail News*, new product concepts and he has a natural ability to feel the pulse of the hunting world.

“My takeaway over 30 years,” says Steve “is the amazing journey deer hunters and managers themselves have taken in that time. We’ve gone from just trying to explain what a food plot was three decades ago to now discussing complex food plot issues such as the chemistry involved with soil tests. It has been a revolution and an evolution. It is an honor to be involved with the company which literally created the food plot revolution that has helped hundreds of thousands of hunters have their best deer hunting ever.”

John White talks to hunters and managers all day long as our Senior Product Consultant and he has heard it all. He too has seen a great leap in sophistication among hunters and managers and is exceptionally proud of the range of products now available to customers throughout the country.

“I remember one day in particular when I took an order for a single small bag of Secret Spot to use on a small area. My very next call was for multiple products on a complex 500-acre hunting property. But I can tell you one thing: the level of interest and enthusiasm in both calls was the same. That’s how my days go with such a wide range of products and so many loyal customers. I have hunters I have dealt with for years and they call often, sometimes with a serious question or just wanting to chat.”

We’ve all heard that time flies when you’re having fun and there’s no doubt time has flown by quickly for us all at the Institute. I read recently, however, that psychologists have a little twist on fun and time; they found that time flies even quicker when you’re having goal-motivated fun. We all can relate to that at the Institute.



Ray Scott

New IMPERIAL WHITETAIL[®] **CONCEAL[™]**

The Whitetail Institute's new product, Imperial Whitetail Conceal, is designed for creating bedding areas for deer and concealment for deer and hunter travel, right where you and your deer need it.

General Description

An annual designed for planting in spring, Conceal is a blend of tall-growing seed varieties, each of which grows to a different height,

producing a thick wall of foliage up to eight feet tall! Conceal is also attractive to deer as a food source. Even so, Conceal isn't intended to replace your food plot plantings. Rather, its attractiveness as a food source just encourages deer to use it more often.

Overcoming Obstacles

Think about how most of us hunters approach scouting and studying maps of our properties to stack the odds in our favor: We try to figure out where deer bed, where their food sources are, and their travel routes — trails that deer will likely use, and approaches we'll use to remain undetected as we hunt. Now, consider that as we go

Designed to improve your property's attractiveness to deer and the huntability of your property.

through that process, we usually find that even the best hunting locations have a hitch of some sort, and it's usually one of two things: helping deer feel safe so that they'll stay in the area, and ensuring that hunters can hunt them while minimizing the chance of being detected. For example, there may be little cover near a potential food plot site for deer to bed in or use as a staging area. Cover for deer to travel from the woods to the food plot may also be inadequate, or the only approach for hunters may be across open ground. Problems like that can make certain food plot sites less productive in terms of deer usage, and even un-huntable if there's no way for hunters to access them without constantly being detected.

Conceal is a game-changer

But what if instead of having to work around, overcome, or live with such problems you could eliminate them? What if you could quickly create bedding areas to help hold deer on your property? What if you could easily create travel corridors where hunters or your deer could travel without being seen? That is exactly what Conceal is designed to do — to stack the odds in your favor by quickly correcting concealment deficiencies on your property!

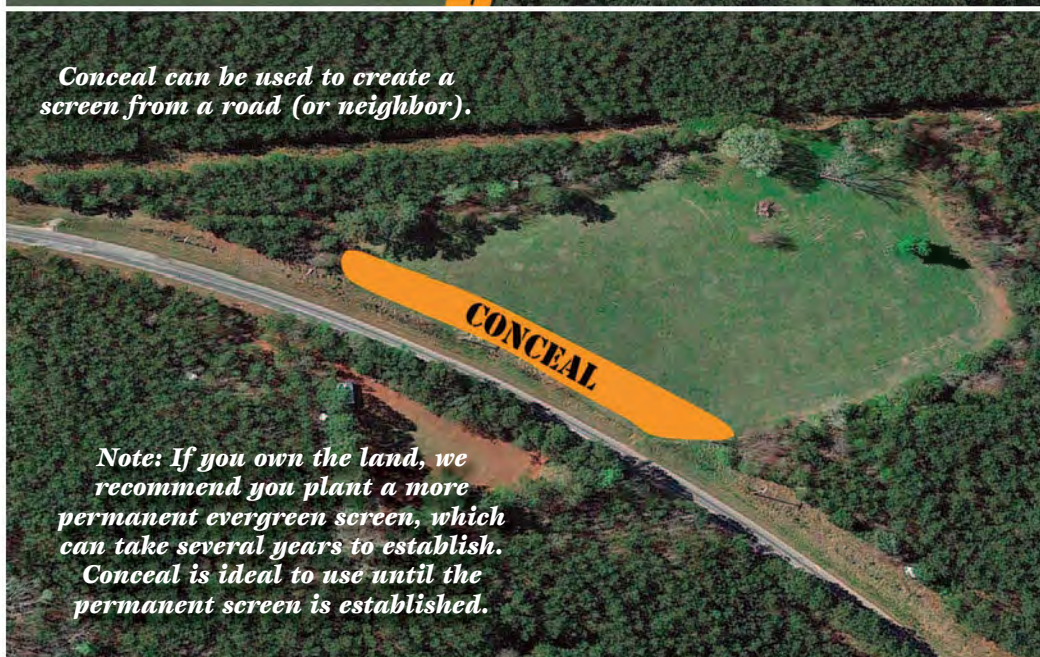
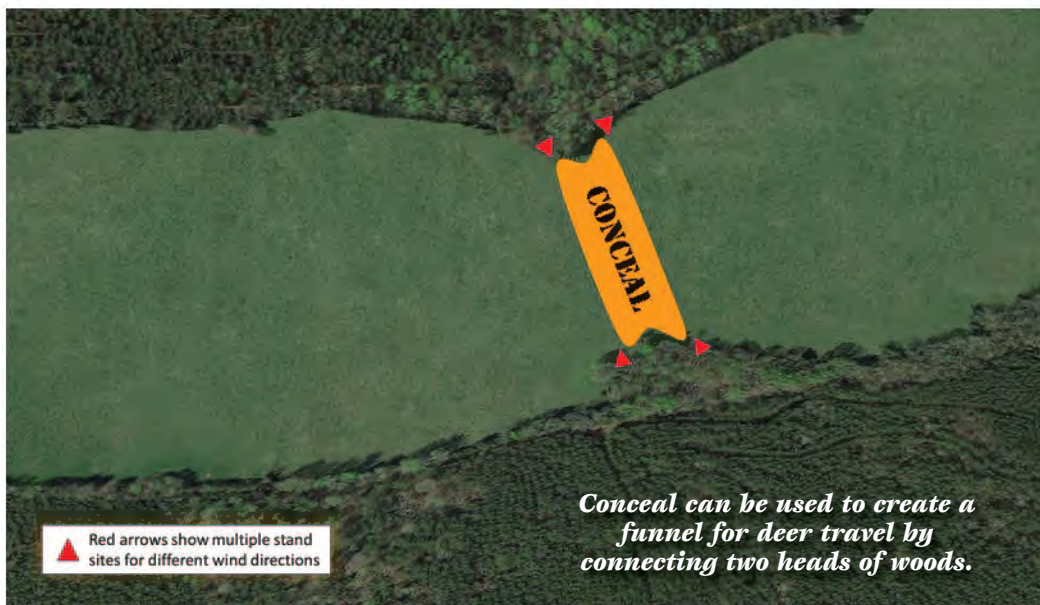
Examples of Potential Uses for Conceal

The accompanying illustrations demonstrate some ways you might use Conceal on your own property. Again, these are just examples. The possible applications for Conceal are limited only by your imagination.

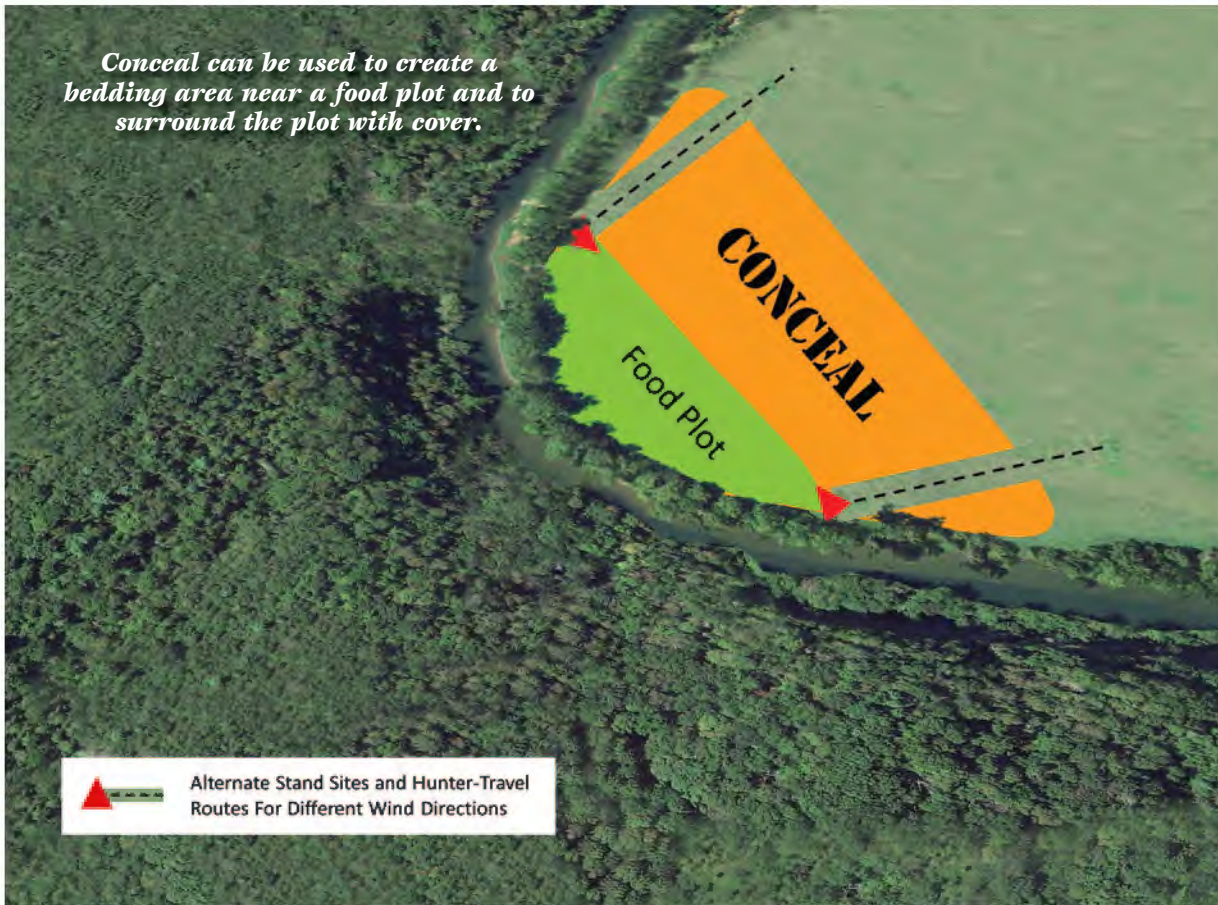
Suggested Planting Dimensions for Conceal

The Whitetail Institute suggests planting Conceal at least 15 to 20 feet wide as a general rule. (One bag of Conceal will plant 1/4-acre, which is approximately 35 feet wide and 300 feet long.) Keep in mind, though, that deer will feed on some of the Conceal components, so you may need to plant wider areas if you're in an area of high deer density or low natural food availability.

If you are planting Conceal to funnel deer and have the room, though, then consider planting Conceal in wider strips of about 90 to 100 feet wide. That will give you a wide-enough funnel that you can hang stands on



Conceal can be used to create a bedding area near a food plot and to surround the plot with cover.



all four corners and always be able to hunt it based on wind direction.

Final Thoughts

One of the components in Conceal provides up to 28 to 30 percent protein and fixes nitrogen. When snow arrives, some of your Conceal stand will bend down. It depends on how much snow you get, of course, but in most cases Conceal should stand up through deer season and continue to provide a good bit of cover thereafter.

Conceal is designed for spring planting only. Medium heavy to lighter soils with soil pH of 6.5 to 7 are optimum. Conceal needs at least six hours of full sunlight per day. 🌻



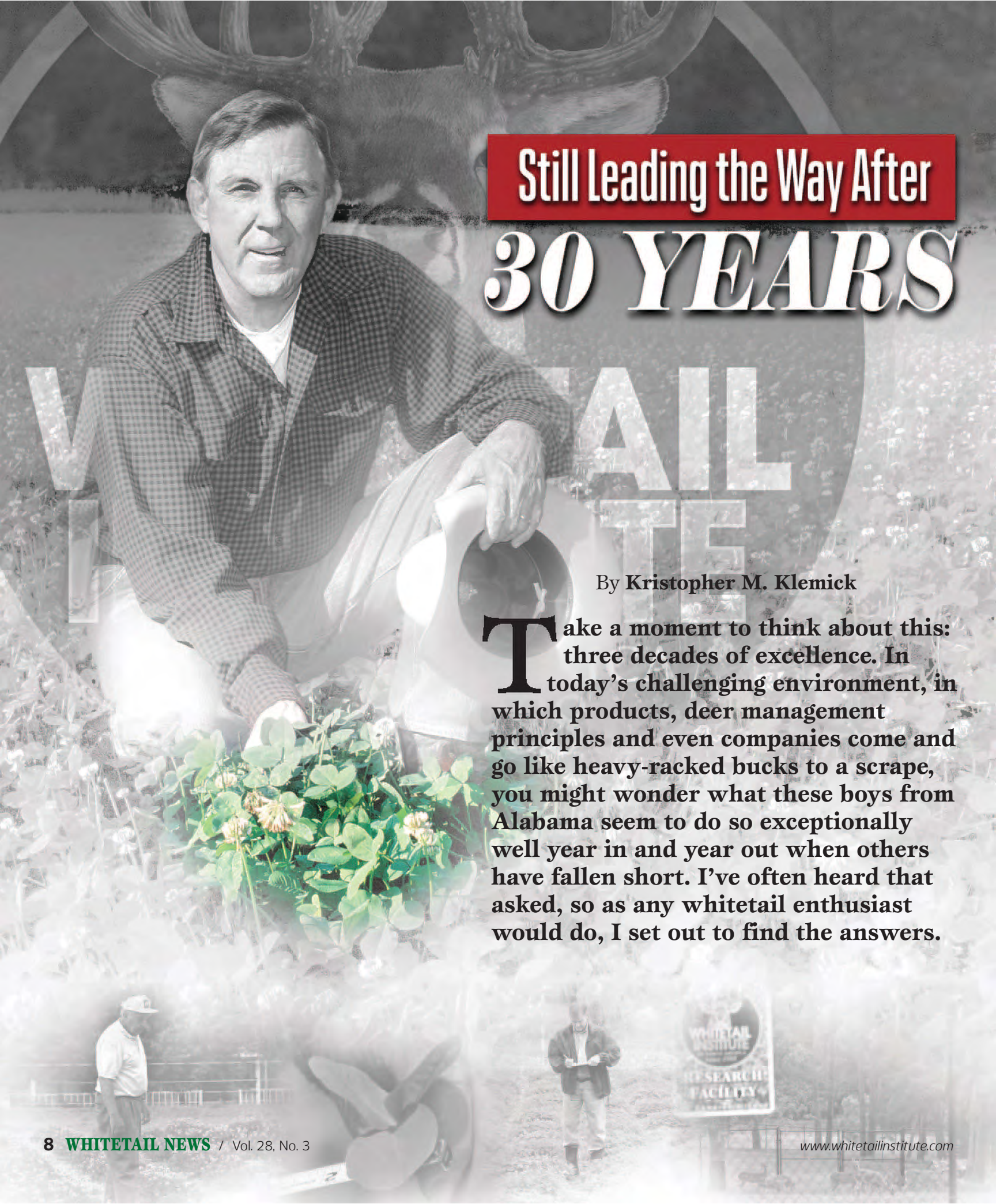
New IMPERIAL WHITETAIL[®] CONCEAL[™]

The Whitetail Institute's new product, Imperial Whitetail CONCEAL, is designed for creating bedding areas for deer, and concealment for deer and hunter travel, right where you and your deer need it. An annual designed for planting in the spring, CONCEAL is a blend of tall growing seed varieties, each of which grows to a different height, producing a thick wall of foliage up to eight feet tall! CONCEAL is also attractive to deer as a food source. Even so, CONCEAL isn't intended to replace your food-plot plantings. Rather, its attractiveness as a food source just encourages deer to use it more often.



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Research = Results[®]



Still Leading the Way After 30 YEARS

By Kristopher M. Klemick

Take a moment to think about this: three decades of excellence. In today's challenging environment, in which products, deer management principles and even companies come and go like heavy-racked bucks to a scrape, you might wonder what these boys from Alabama seem to do so exceptionally well year in and year out when others have fallen short. I've often heard that asked, so as any whitetail enthusiast would do, I set out to find the answers.

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Some companies try to capitalize on what's hot at the moment or spend loads of time and money trying to create the impression and excitement about a new must-have item. Typically, though, marketing is priority No. 1. Research and testing in developing the product are minimal, corners are cut, quality is subpar and customer service is almost nonexistent. Honestly, how many gadgets or gizmos ever lived up to your expectations? Fortunately, more than 30 years ago, the Whitetail Institute of North America came into our lives, and hunters and deer managers across the whitetail's range are thankful for it every day.

So where did it start? The story begins in the mid-1980s with longtime deer hunter Ray Scott, who for years had planted what Southerners call green fields. Ray struggled with the annual plant-and-pray dice game, hoping that Mother Nature would cooperate, as would the cereal grains he planted each year.

One year in the early 1980s, the owner of a farm-supply store Ray frequented gave him a bag of clover and encouraged him to give it a shot. That year, Ray planted a dozen green fields with various cereal grains and, ever the opportunist, left an area in the middle of one plot for the clover. The stand took hold, and Ray hunted it one afternoon. Six deer came to the field and walked through the cereal grains to feed in the clover. Ray shot a nice 7-point, which wrapped up the day. He went back to the stand several days later and witnessed the same deer behavior.

"That's when the light came on," Ray said.

Deer were entering the plot and going straight for the clover, feeding on it for hours. They passed over a smorgasbord of other forage in favor of the clover. Later that season, Ray put a friend in the stand and told him to watch closely what the deer fed on. After dark, Ray's friend said, "I don't know what you planted in the middle of that field, but all the deer that came in went straight to it."

Case closed. Ray wanted to know why.

It took some time and a lot of investigating, but Ray eventually discovered the person responsible for developing the clover variety that had produced such incredible success. To his surprise, the man was less than an hour from him: Dr. Wiley Johnson, a well-respected and world-renowned agronomist, plant geneticist and professor at Auburn University.

Ray asked Dr. Johnson why deer preferred the clover to the other forages. Dr. Johnson replied, "It's just the nature of the plant. Not only is it more attractive, but it's much more nutritious as well." Ray asked him if he could develop a new vari-

ety of clover specifically for deer, and when Dr. Johnson replied, "Yes I can," Ray hired him and the work began.

Researchers gathered more than 100 varieties of clover from across the world for extensive study. They knew they wanted something that would thrive across the whitetail's range. It had to be heat and drought-resistant and cold-tolerant, and it had to establish quickly. Plus it had to offer an extremely high protein content and be exceptionally attractive to deer.

After seven years of repeated testing and crossbreeding, the Institute's first proprietary perennial clover variety created for whitetail deer was developed and ready for hunters. At the time, however, skeptics wondered how many people would see value in what could essentially be considered as part-time recreational farming. After all, farmers plant fields to earn a living, so why would anyone spend time, money and other resources feeding deer? Having seen what was possible, though, Ray knew.

Today, business continues to grow for the Whitetail Institute of North America, and at a pace exceeded only by the growth of many state record books. Such success isn't by chance. The Whitetail Institute is the leader in deer nutrition because that's all the company does. You won't find its name on other products outside that wheelhouse. The Institute has never wavered from the mission of providing hunters and deer managers with the highest-quality nutritional prod-



John White has been answering customers' questions since 1988.

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ucts that are scientifically developed and proven in the field. All Whitetail Institute products must pass years of relentless testing and study followed by even more tests before a bag makes it into your hands.

Whitetail Institute's commitment to research and development is second to none in the industry, but it doesn't stop there. Its customer service can be summarized in two words: world class. Nowhere else will you find the level of professional support and information than what you'll get from the Whitetail Institute of North America. In fact, the magazine you're holding is an example. Offered to all Whitetail Institute customers, *Whitetail News* has helped educate and entertain legions of hunters and habitat managers with the most comprehensive information about whitetail nutrition from the day the first edition was published in 1991. And although this magazine is an excellent resource, the Whitetail Institute's priority is to serve you. Its employees want to be certain you enjoy the same level of success as what you see and read about on these pages. How can they do that? The answer is simple: their people.

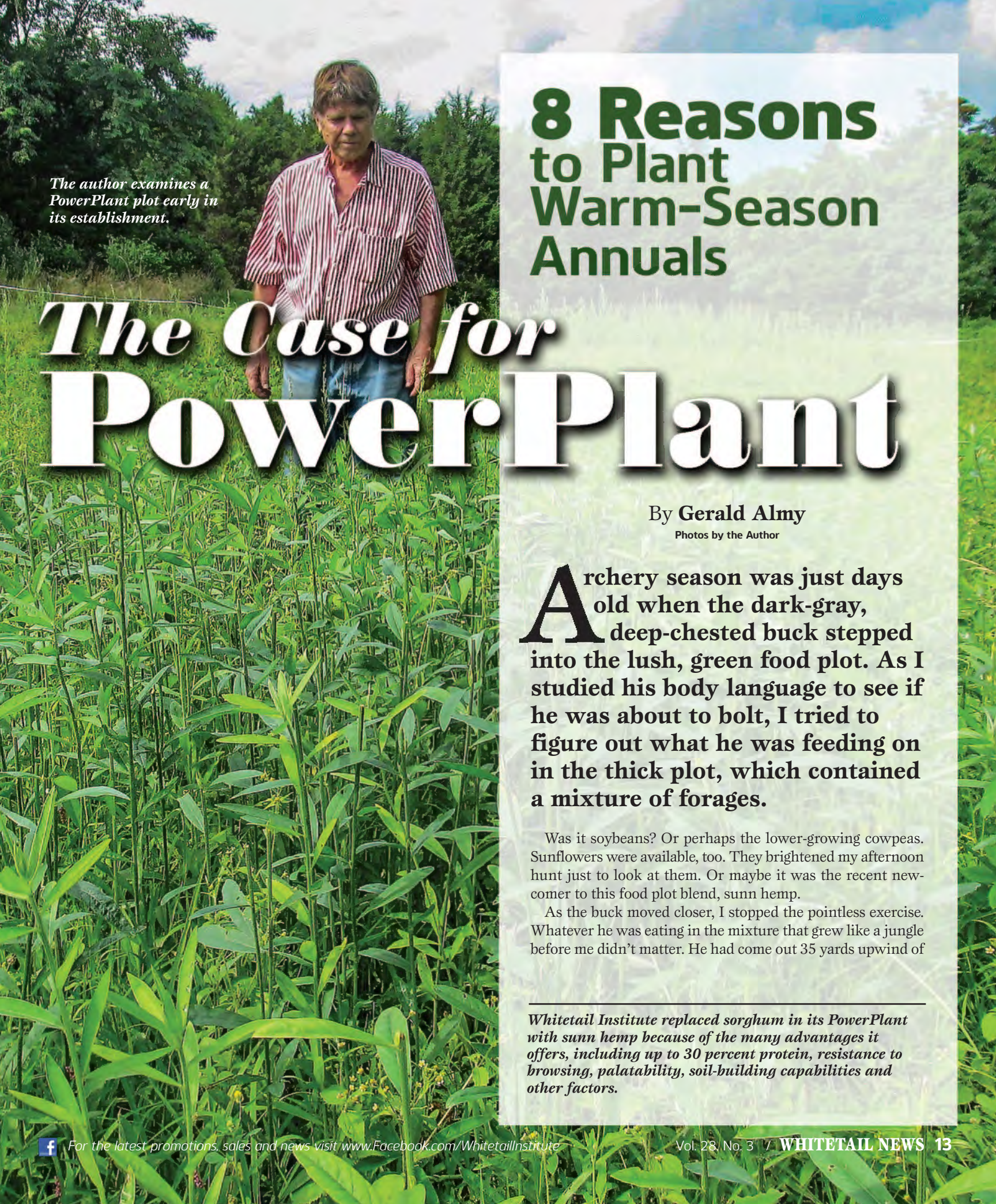
William Cousins and Ray's sons, Steve and Wilson, run the day-to-day operations. In fact, when you call (800) 688-3030, the first friendly voice you'll hear is Steve's. Within seconds, you'll speak to one of Whitetail Institute's qualified consultants, who can answer questions ranging from soil testing and fertilization to planting techniques and equipment. They have an endless clearinghouse of information.

What makes that part of the Whitetail Institute experience so special is you'll never be transferred to a line that just rings or cycles you back to the menu where you were 12 steps earlier. You also won't be handed from one person to the next in all the wrong departments. But perhaps the most fundamental difference and most important? You'll never hear, "Your call is important to us. Please hold, and the next available representative will be with you shortly." Everyone, including the owners, are ready to answer the phone the minute you need them. Standing in the middle of a field scratching your head wishing you had someone to talk to? Have a problem with weeds? Not sure what plants would do best in your area? Curious about mineral supplementation? Call the Whitetail Institute. Its professional consultants are available to serve you. It's that exceptional level of dedication to you, Whitetail Institute customers and friends, that keeps Whitetail Institute products at the heart of managing deer.

Two of the pillars from which the company was built — its commitment to you and the whitetail deer — continue to be the company's guiding principles. Providing exceptional customer service and products that deliver on their promise are foundational to an honest day's work at the Whitetail Institute, and folks there would not have it any other way.

"In any business," Ray said, "you can develop a good reputation or a bad reputation. It takes a long time and consistency for people to accept that when you say something, they can count on it. And once you have their respect, you have to be careful not to tarnish it. Even the best reputation can be lost overnight if folks think that you're not being honest and honorable with them."

"We're proud of the reputation we've built over the past three decades, and we plan to work hard to continue to earn respect from hunters across North America," Steve said. "Our philosophy is really fairly simple. We follow the Golden Rule, which guides us to treat each and every customer or potential customer exactly like we would want to be treated if we were on the other end of the conversation." 

A man with short brown hair, wearing a red and white vertically striped short-sleeved button-down shirt and blue jeans, stands in a field of tall green plants. He is looking down at the plants. The background shows a line of trees under a cloudy sky.

The author examines a PowerPlant plot early in its establishment.

8 Reasons to Plant Warm-Season Annuals

The Case for PowerPlant

By Gerald Almy

Photos by the Author

Archery season was just days old when the dark-gray, deep-chested buck stepped into the lush, green food plot. As I studied his body language to see if he was about to bolt, I tried to figure out what he was feeding on in the thick plot, which contained a mixture of forages.

Was it soybeans? Or perhaps the lower-growing cowpeas. Sunflowers were available, too. They brightened my afternoon hunt just to look at them. Or maybe it was the recent newcomer to this food plot blend, sunn hemp.

As the buck moved closer, I stopped the pointless exercise. Whatever he was eating in the mixture that grew like a jungle before me didn't matter. He had come out 35 yards upwind of

Whitetail Institute replaced sorghum in its PowerPlant with sunn hemp because of the many advantages it offers, including up to 30 percent protein, resistance to browsing, palatability, soil-building capabilities and other factors.

my tree stand. Crossbow season was open, and I knew from his body characteristics he was a mature buck. I'd seen him before, watched his antlers develop through August and seen them turn hard, clean and burnished brown with September's cooling nights.

But I couldn't help wondering what he was eating and whether he would have come to the field if it had been planted in only one forage, such as soybeans or cowpeas. Those plants grow lower to the ground. And although deer love them, it's questionable whether a buck of that age would have ventured from the adjoining thicket to feed on them in shooting light in our high-pressured hunting area.

Without the taller sunn hemp and sunflowers — plants that grow higher than the peas and beans, and let the peas and beans wrap around their stalks and grow higher — I doubted I would have aimed my crossbow scope at the sweet spot behind this buck's shoulder. With the extra vertical structure those plants offered (plus two more tasty varieties of forage), the buck had the security he needed to come out with plenty of daylight for a clean shot — and a tracking job, if required. In fact, there was so much cover I had to carefully pick my aiming spot so the buck's vitals weren't hidden by the tangled mass of warm-season foods. By planting the blend of forages in PowerPlant, I had offered four prime summer annuals that appealed to the varied taste preferences of deer, plus loads of security cover.

But when I squeezed the crossbow trigger, I wasn't thinking about that. My thoughts were, "Stay calm, aim carefully, don't flinch and follow through." And after I saw the arrow strike cleanly behind the buck's shoulder, different emotions took over. I said a silent prayer of thanks to be alive, to be fortunate enough to harvest the magnificent

animal, to own the small parcel of land I could manage for wildlife and to have found my passion in life as a hunter and land manager.

As I field-dressed the heavy 4-year old buck, I couldn't believe that many food plotters don't have any of those prime warm-season annuals in their whitetail nutrition program on their hunting land. I don't claim to be a food plot genius, but I realized early in my 30 years of food plotting there was a strong need for plants that grow fast and produce lots of nutritious forage during the prime spring-through-summer period, when bucks grow antlers and does raise fawns.

The plants that fit that need are unquestionably warm-season annuals. The personnel at the Whitetail Institute recognized that long ago, too. And their answer was a carefully and meticulously developed blend of seeds: PowerPlant. By the end of this article, I think you'll realize it's probably the only spring-through-summer annual seed mixture you need, too.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's backtrack and delve deeper into whether there's a place for warm-season annuals in the average food plotter's management plan. What do they offer? Why do you need them? Which ones are best?

Astonishingly, some estimates say only one of five food plotters plant any warm-season legumes. I'd venture that figure is considerably higher for readers of Whitetail News, who are way above average in their knowledge of a deer's seasonal nutritional needs. But many don't want to fool with spring and summer annuals. They figure they have things covered with a few perennial plots of Imperial Whitetail Clover, Alfa-Rack Plus or Fusion, and then focus on annuals for their fall and winter plantings.

Certainly, those perennials are great products. I plant them and they are critical for supplying your deer herd a high-protein food source in the early spring through summer. But by limiting your spring-through-summer offerings to just clover, alfalfa and chicory, you miss many advantages you can achieve by including warm-season annuals in your food plot program.

Here are eight reasons to plant these crops with — not instead of — Imperial Whitetail Clover, Alfa-Rack Plus and Fusion.

The Great 8

- 1. Unmatched Tonnage:** Warm-season annuals can produce four to seven tons of high protein forage per acre and can last more than five to seven months.
- 2. Not Wasting Land:** Why leave some potential areas of your property unplanted during summer? You might have a fallow plot or another in which you're waiting to plant Whitetail Oats Plus in September. Perhaps there's another plot you could work into shape during a spare weekend.
- 3. The Ability to Double-Plant:** In some parts of the country you can get two plantings in the same plot. Put in PowerPlant during April or May, and then mow and disk up some sections of it for fall/winter plantings, or use strategically placed food plot paths near your stand (as Jon Cooner has outlined in previous *Whitetail News* articles). Put in Winter-Greens, Tall Tine Tubers, Beets & Greens, Pure Attraction or Whitetail Oats Plus in trails or strips you've mowed and tilled under in September. Those doubled-up plots will produce forage almost all year.
- 4. Variety:** This has been pointed out but deserves repeating. Some deer like one forage, but others might prefer a different one. Why just offer clover and alfalfa during summer if some whitetails might

Sunflowers and sunn hemp in PowerPlant provide shade, moisture retention and structure for the beans and peas to wrap around and grow higher. They also provide security cover for deer encouraging them to use it as bedding cover as well as a food source.



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have a strong craving for peas or soybeans?

5.Competition: If you don't offer those tasty, high-protein forages, your neighbor might. When bucks find that buffet of attractive summer annuals just across your boundary, then you will have to work and hope to get them back on your property.

6.Nutrition: The payoff is clear: The high protein these annual forages contain helps bucks reach their maximum antler potential and allows does to provide their fawns more milk.

7.Drought Tolerance: Although clover produces bountiful crops during spring and fall, dry spells can cut back production during July and August. That's when these drought-resistant annuals take up the slack.

8.Cover: This is an ingredient few food plots offer. Perennials and fall annuals provide lots of nutrition, but few of them offer tall enough vegetation to also supply prime security cover. PowerPlant can. The cover is so good that some old bucks simply bed down in it after they stuff their bellies.

Critical Ingredients

We've established solid reasons to consider putting in warm-season annuals. But which ones are best? We'll go through them, but the folks at the Whitetail Institute have researched this far more than you or I could in a lifetime. They've settled on the best forages and the best variety of each plant type for the premier warm-season annual offering: PowerPlant.

The most frequently considered annuals for summer food plots include three legumes: soybeans, peas and sunn hemp, plus sunflowers.

Soybeans: We're not discussing the beans planted for seed, meal and oils but those grown for leaf production. Forage soybeans are a great warm-season annual. You can spray them with Arrest Max to reduce grass competition, and they rate high in protein content, palatability and digestibility. They're an absolute must for any warm-season blend.

Peas: These plants originated in Ethiopia and offer great nutrition, with 20 to 28 percent protein. They are fairly tolerant of poor-quality soils but do best when the pH is brought close to neutral and fertilizer is added according to soil-test recommendations. They're reliable and easy to grow, and deer devour them until the first frosts of autumn.

Soybeans and peas have one drawback: early heavy browsing pressure on young plants can hurt them. That's where the final two ingredients of PowerPlant come into play — another legume, sunn hemp and sunflowers. And here's where a crucial word comes into play: synergy, which means the total effect of certain elements combined is more beneficial than the parts added together would imply. These plants provide benefits to the beans and peas and also receive positive effects from them.

Sunflowers: These beautiful plants grow fast and tall, protecting and helping shield the peas and soybeans from overbrowsing when they're young and vulnerable. They also provide structure so the vicious, climbing beans can cling to their stalks and grow higher. Deer can then feed on the pea and bean forage at higher levels without hurting the plants.

Including sunflowers with lower-growing legumes also provides other synergistic benefits. They provide shade, which keeps moisture levels higher. And because deer like the green leaves of the sunflower plant and the oil-rich seeds, the sunflowers also divert some feeding pressure from the peas and beans.

Strategies For Extending The Utilization of PowerPlant

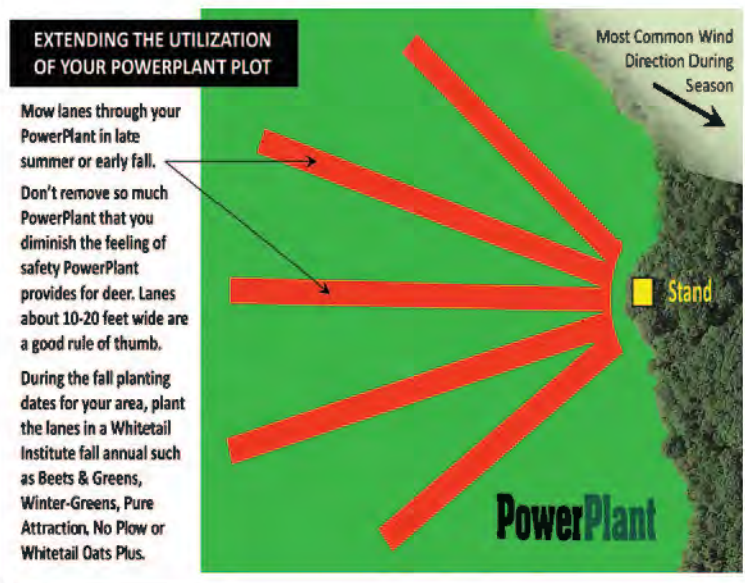
PowerPlant provides an abundance of highly nutritious forage that lasts until the first hard frosts of fall. After frosts arrive, deer can continue to use the residual beans and peas, but the forage growth will be finished. Even so, the remaining PowerPlant will still continue to provide cover for deer. New PowerPlant stands up tall in the cold much better than the original PowerPlant.

Here are some strategies to help your PowerPlant plot remain attractive through fall and winter and create one of the best harvest plots possible:

Most areas have a common prevailing wind direction during hunting season. (In central Alabama, for example, the wind usually blows out of the northwest during the season.)

Once you determine your prevailing wind direction during hunting season, locate a permanent stand site on the downwind corner or edge of the PowerPlant plot. Then, 3-4 weeks before the start of your fall planting window, mow lanes through the PowerPlant, wait a few weeks for the clippings to dry, and then disk or till the plant matter into the lanes. When your fall planting dates arrive, plant the lanes in an Imperial Whitetail annual such as Beets & Greens, Winter-Greens, Pure Attraction, No-Plow or Whitetail Oats Plus.

When deciding how much lane area to add, keep in mind that you want enough lane area to keep the plot attracting deer even after frosts, but not so much that you destroy the feeling of safety deer have in the tall, thick PowerPlant. If you do it right, you'll likely find that deer continue to bed in the PowerPlant and step in and out of the lanes throughout the day. The lanes are skinny and provide a feeling of safety for deer inside the tall adjacent PowerPlant. Then, the Beets & Greens, Winter-Greens, Pure Attraction, No-Plow or Whitetail Oats Plus in the lanes will make the plot an attractive source of nutrition all the way through the late season.



The synergy goes both ways, though. The low-growing legumes produce more nitrogen than they need, which the sunflowers can use. And they also help retain soil moisture with their dense canopy of leaves, from which all the plants in the blend benefit.

Sunn hemp: The final PowerPlant ingredient offers many of the same structural and security benefits as sunflowers but also much more. Its inclusion in the seed mixture testifies to the Whitetail Institute's philosophy of always experimenting and researching to find ways to improve a product. It plays a role in PowerPlant that was originally filled by sorghum. Through constant research, the Whitetail Institute staff discovered that this plant, which dates back to 600 B.C., could do everything sorghum could, only better. Never rest on its laurels. Never keep a product the same because it's easier. Always strive for improvement. That's the Whitetail Institute way. This wasn't a change the company had to make. It did so to make PowerPlant even better. After research and extensive field testing, finding the best version of the product and then producing the huge amount of seed needed, the company made the switch.

Sunn hemp offers up to 30 percent protein, provides strong vertical structure for soybeans to cling to and adds to the security feeling in a plot for wary bucks. Its small elliptical leaves are highly palatable to deer, and it comes back strong after being browsed. It's also a soil builder that recycles phosphate, nitrogen and potash, bringing them out from deep levels and leaving them higher in the topsoil for peas and beans and future plantings to benefit from. Sunn hemp also suppresses weeds.

The Easy Case for PowerPlant

It's clear from this rundown you have some great choices for warm-season annual food plot forages. The obvious conclusion is that it's best to plant all of them rather than trying to pick the best and put in

three or four plots with those seeds. That way, you'll offer a variety of plants that will appeal to deer while gaining the synergistic benefits mentioned.

But if you think you can cut corners and throw together a mixture of various generics, think again. To thrive and complement each other, the best varieties of each of these seeds must be selected and then blended in the right proportions so they don't out-compete each other or negate the advantages the other plants offer. Years of research goes into finding or developing the best varieties of seed and perfecting the best ratios.

Hopefully this article has shown you why warm-season annuals are a great idea and that — unless you have a very small parcel — you should consider including them in your food plot program. You've also probably concluded that a blend is best, offering many benefits individual plants sown separately wouldn't. That's why the Whitetail Institute offers one summer-annual food plot product, covering a whitetail manager's needs for warm-season forages from April through October. It's one product because it covers all the bases, with components that complement and enhance each other.

PowerPlant is easy to establish, grows quickly and creates incredible tonnage of high-protein, highly digestible forage. It's a great choice for improving the soil after a perennial planting has declined, and it's perfect for double-cropping with a later planting of Whitetail Oats Plus, Winter-Greens, Pure Attraction or Beets & Greens in September or October.

And PowerPlant sells out virtually every year. To me, that says it all. 🍷



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How to Hunt Whitetail Institute Food Plots for

Turkeys



By **Brian Lovett**

Photos by Tes Randle Jolly

At first glance, the relationship between turkeys and food plots seems straightforward.

Turkeys love Imperial Whitetail Clover plots, of course, as the first green shoots of spring attract eager hens and their gobbler escorts. And as that clover grows, it provides nesting cover and holds abundant insects, nourishing protein-hungry poults through summer and fall. More important, turkey hunters have come to realize that food plots are great spots to fill spring tags.

But as any spring veteran will tell you, hunting turkeys at food plots isn't as simple as setting up and waiting. To take advantage, you should use specialized approaches and tactics. Here's a quick primer to help you capitalize on the turkey/food plot relationship.

Open Access

Decoys and good concealment — in the form of a pop-up blind or natural cover — are critical for hunting food plots. As with any open area, turkeys in food plots can spot danger at long distances, and they will bolt at the slightest movement from a potential predator. In addition, they can easily see other birds in the plot, so you need decoys to provide visual reassurance to your calling. A turkey that hears yelping but cannot see the source across an open space will not approach, as it instinctively knows something's amiss.

Combining decoys and concealment can be as simple as randomly setting up a blind along the plot

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and staking out a decoy or two to attract birds. However, depending on the size of the plot, turkeys won't always feed within gun range of your setup or walk over to check out your fakes. Successful hunters scout food plots to determine when and where turkeys enter and exit the fields and how they move through them. You can accomplish this by setting up trail cameras, glassing fields before the season or looking for sign, including tracks, droppings, scratching and dusting bowls. Sometimes, turkeys roost at the edges of plots and fly down into them at daylight. In other situations, they might roost farther away and hit the fields at midmorning.

Typically, birds will access fields much like deer, using paths of least resistance, such as logging roads, cattle paths, open ridges or similar spots. Common sense dictates that it's best to set up near spots where turkeys access fields. However, pop-up blinds let you set up in the open, as turkeys don't usually react adversely to those square or round blobs. So, if turkeys seem to cross the middle of a plot at a specific point every day, don't be afraid to set your blind there to intercept them.

Identifying patterns gives you a good starting point. However, turkeys don't stick to consistent routines. In fact, their inconsistency can be maddening, as they seem to appear in fields at random spots and times. That's where decoys come into play.

Fakes for Realism

Many combinations work, but the best mixes feature one or two hens in natural poses, such as a feeder and a looker, and a jake or gobbler decoy. Hen decoys might attract a fired-up gobbler with no girl-friends, but henned-up longbeards often just ignore them or gobble now and then, seemingly inviting the new hens to join the group. Jake or strutter decoys, however, can prompt aggressive responses from gobblers looking to run off interlopers, pulling them within easy range. I prefer jakes, as they seem to infuriate more longbeards than strutter decoys. Caveat: jake and strutter decoys can sometimes intimidate gobblers, sending them skulking or even running away. Watch how turkeys react to your decoys, and pull the jakes or strutters if birds seem to shy away from them.

Most folks seem to randomly plop decoys in a blob 25 yards from their setup, but that doesn't maximize the effectiveness of fakes. Place hens — whether feeders or lookers — in a loose line, as if they're working across the field. Then, place the jake or gobbler decoy behind them, as toms and jakes often trail hens. If you're using a hen decoy in a squatting (mating) position, place it directly by the jake or gobbler. Always face the jake or gobbler decoy toward your setup or blind, as an aggressive longbeard will typically go face to face with the intruder, letting you raise or adjust your

gun for a shot. Gun hunters should place decoys at about 20 to 30 yards from their hides, ensuring an easy shot with a good pattern. Bow-hunters will want them closer — even 10 or 15 yards — to facilitate better shot opportunities.

Calling Approaches

Calling is the essence of turkey hunting, but as with any spring hunting scenario, you must use your head when yelping to food-plot turkeys. Remember the situation: Turkeys already want to be there, so you're at the X. You don't have to go crazy on the yelper to pull in birds. Instead, strive for realism.

If you're set up at a plot before flydown, there's no need to call to roosted birds. Do a flydown cackle or two to simulate turkeys entering the field, and then strive to imitate a hen walking through and feeding in the plot, combining some plain yelps with clucking and purring. Often, that's all it takes, but note how birds respond, and adjust your approach accordingly. Some days, anxious gobblers might react excitedly to aggressive yelping and cutting. More often, turkeys seem to respond better to softer, subtler approaches. Listen for clues, and try various approaches to find one that sticks.

Midmorning, midafternoon or late-afternoon cold-calling also works well at food plots. Slip quietly and unseen into your blind or setup, and call every few minutes to strike a reaction. Usually, it's best to start with soft, content stuff and slowly build your level of excitement and volume. Use several calls — diaphragm, pot, box,

wingbone or others — to find a sound that seems to resonate with nearby birds. And be patient, as turkeys often won't respond immediately but will slowly work toward the calling to check it out. Resolve to sit at least a couple of hours, and keep an eye peeled for silent birds that enter the plot.

The Food Plot Experience

Food plots bring more to turkey hunting than simply providing good harvest opportunities. The open spaces let youngsters watch turkeys and see them approach, giving them a greater appreciation of the experience and letting them prepare for a quality shot. Also, because food plots call for a stationary approach in a blind or similar hide, they're ideal for children, other beginning hunters or folks who aren't mobile. Above all, knowing your food plots provide turkeys with quality nutrition and habitat helps you appreciate your connection with the land and the stewardship aspect of managing your property.

And remember: Those beautiful green plots continue to help deer year-round, so even when you're obsessed with spring turkeys, you're continuing to improve the quality of the deer for your fall and winter whitetail hunting. 🍁





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MY BEST SEASON EVER...

AND I DIDN'T FILL A TAG

By Tracy Breen

Photos by the Author

For the past 20 years, I've made a living in the outdoor industry. For many years, most of my income came from writing hunting articles and selling them to publications such as this. It's safe to say that for many years, my business revolved around traveling across the country hunting and writing about the hunts. A few years ago, that changed when my son Thane was old enough to start hunting. My home state of Michigan and several other states hold mentored hunting programs that let adults take young children hunting before they take hunter's safety courses. The goal is to get youngsters involved in outdoor sports as young as possible. The program worked on my son. By the time he was 10, he was obsessed with hunting.

Thane Breen with his first buck.

During the past few years, my hunting has taken a back seat to his hunting. I decided long before he was old enough, that when he started hunting, I would step back and focus my efforts on him and his success. I know my strengths and weaknesses. One weakness occurs if I have a bow or gun in my hand. I will go into kill mode and focus on filling my tag. I didn't want to be a guy who made his living in the outdoor industry but had children who weren't interested in the outdoors.

Two springs ago, I believed the timing was right to focus on having a great year afield. The season started with a trip to Florida to chase Osceola turkeys. My wife has always wanted to take our children to Walt Disney World, and I thought it was the perfect opportunity to meet Mickey Mouse and a few strutting longbeards. I called my buddy Jeff Budz, owner of Tag-It-World Wide, and lined up a spring turkey hunt.

Before the trip, I worked extensively with my son on properly aiming and shooting his shotgun. However, I couldn't teach him how to control gobbler fever. After a couple of days of hunting, he killed a jake, and it was an experience I will never forget. The next day turned out to be a bit of a struggle for him. In Florida, you can tag two spring gobblers, so after shooting the jake, we decided to pursue a mature gobbler. Budz set us in an area where he knew a lone gobbler was hanging out. Sure enough, soon after daylight, the gobbler walked within 20 yards of our blind. My son missed him. He was devastated afterward, but I told him that was part of hunting. It won't be the last turkey he misses. Later that day, he turned things around and took a huge longbeard I called in for him. We experienced low lows and high highs in one day. That's something many hunters who keep at it after

a miss have experienced.

Many people wouldn't take a week off work to take their son to a far-off place to kill their first turkey. The cost combined with time away from work scares them from taking such a trip. We did it because I wanted my son's first real turkey hunt to be in a far-off place. I wanted him to go on a hunt that neither of us will forget. I wanted him to get hooked on hunting. The Florida turkey trip lit a spark in him, and when deer season arrived, the spark had turned into a full-fledged fire. He couldn't wait to deer hunt.

Before the deer season, I decided I wasn't deer hunting unless my son filled at least one tag. Michigan has a two-day youth deer season in September. Opening day of that hunt, my son and I sat in a Redneck bale blind at my small hobby farm. Soon after daylight, my son experienced buck fever for the first time. A doe walked out at 60 yards and was as broadside as a barn when I told him he could shoot. The gun barked, and the doe took off. My son missed her clean. The next day, he missed a small buck at another property we had permission to hunt.

To say he was frustrated is an understatement. I was frustrated, too. I began to wonder how many deer he would miss before he put it all together. It was four. During the archery season, he missed a buck with a crossbow. On opening day of gun season, he missed a doe. After each miss, we went home and shot the bow or gun. He would hit the bullseye almost every time. I realized buck fever had him in a stranglehold, and the only thing that would cure it was killing a deer.

Four days after missing the doe with a gun, a 6-point buck walked onto our property while we were sitting in a Redneck Tower Blind. This time, my son held it together long enough to make a killing shot.



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The shot was low but somehow found the vitals, and the rest, as they say, is history. For the rest of the season, my son and I hunted hard in hopes that he would tag another deer, but it didn't happen. I didn't go hunting without him. In fact, I never deer hunted by myself during the season. Given what I do for a living, many people are amazed I didn't hunt. I'm amazed more dads don't do the same thing.

I have cerebral palsy. Hunting of any kind is difficult for me. As I age, it's becoming even harder. Sitting in a tree stand or blind, hiking for hours in the woods, and dragging or packing an animal out of the woods can be tough. I knew when it was my son's turn to hunt that I had to give it my all or we wouldn't be successful. If I tried to hunt hard for myself and try to help him fill a tag, our odds of success would be slim, because filling my tags is sometimes difficult. Looking back a year later, I know I made the right choice. Until he grows up and leaves home, hunting will revolve around him and my other son. There are only so many hours in a day. It's difficult to accomplish everything we want to. Sometimes, we have to make tough choices. I have chosen to take a back seat and make sure my children fall in love with hunting.

In today's fast-paced world, it's easy to see why children don't hunt. They have so many other distractions. Sports, activities, computers and video games compete for their time. Parents are also spread thin. As a result, many parents don't have the time to take their children hunting. When a parent has a little bit of time to hunt, they hunt by themselves. Life pulls at all of us. Finding time to hunt can be challenging. If you remove yourself from the equation and focus on taking your children hunting, finding time is a little easier.

I believe we cannot do everything. When we try, we often fail. I chose to sacrifice my hunting season, so my son would get to experience all the outdoors has to offer. When I speak at hunting banquets, I'm often asked how my hunting season went. I tell people I had my best hunting season ever this past year and didn't fill a tag. Many people look at me like I have three heads. I follow that by saying my son shot two turkeys, a buck and a pile of fox squirrels. I can tell many people think I made a huge sacrifice by not hunting. The truth is it was not a sacrifice. It was the best season I ever had. Watching the joy on my son's face when he wrapped his hands around



Thane, Jeff Budz, right, and the author, left, after a successful Florida hunt.

the antlers of his buck is something I will never forget.

Often, we choose to fill our children's lives with sports, homework and piano lessons. The only way our children will fall in love with hunting is if it's a priority in their lives and yours. If you are reading this and have young children at home, make hunting a priority in their lives. Cut back on your hunting if you have to. You will be amazed at how fast they fall in love with all things outdoors. 🦃



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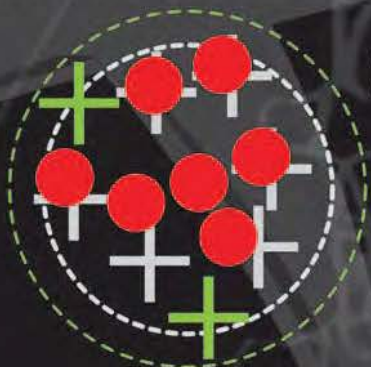
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WHITETAIL INSTITUTE CUSTOMER SERVICE:

*Timely,
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to Help*

By Hollis Ayres

The Whitetail Institute's business has grown exponentially since it was founded more than 30 years ago. The reasons include unsurpassed product quality and extraordinary customer service, which have helped tens of thousands of hunters across North America experience their best hunting ever. Much has been written about the exhaustive scientific research, development and testing that the Whitetail Institute devotes to product quality. Here, we'll discuss the customer service side of the Whitetail Institute and the in-house consultants who fulfill this vital part of the Whitetail Institute recipe for success.

Why does the Whitetail Institute even have in-house consultants? That's a valid question. After all, it's extremely expensive, and one-on-one



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conversations don't seem to be the customer service norm these days, with more companies relying on computerized customer service systems such as Internet forms or endless telephone menus. And let me tell you, I hate those things. One reason is that having to wade through multiple levels of menus doesn't always get me to the right service area. The main reason I hate them, though, is I think they're downright rude. The way I see it, if I've given my hard-earned money to a company to buy its product, they at least owe me the basic courtesy of responding to my questions in a way that shows me that I matter to them as a customer.

And that precisely describes the philosophy that has governed Whitetail Institute customer service since its beginning. Whitetail Institute founder Ray Scott explained: "Building a healthy business requires extreme dedication to two things: product quality and customer service. Providing truly top-quality customer service takes a lot. When a customer calls, you can't just consider that your job is to answer a question. You have to consider that you're building a relationship with that customer as a person. And after all, that's only fair — he's giving his business to you, and you owe it to him to give him the highest quality product you can and then give him timely, useful customer service support."

Critical Features of Whitetail Institute Customer Service

Timely response: Whitetail Institute customer service is designed

to be timely. Take the Whitetail Institute's toll-free customer service line, for example. The customer service extension is almost always answered quickly. The Whitetail Institute is strict about that — so strict, in fact, that I'll let you in on a secret: Every office at the Whitetail Institute has a strobe light mounted on the wall. If the consultant line rings more than twice during business hours without being answered, the strobe light in every office automatically goes off, and everyone drops what they are doing to answer the phone. Folks, customer service doesn't get more dedicated to timely response than that.

Knowledgeable people who are eager to help: The main reason for the high quality of Whitetail Institute customer service is the people who provide it. Here, you'll meet a few of the leaders of the Whitetail Institute's in-house consulting staff. As you'll see, they are a pretty diverse bunch. Even so, they have much in common. For example, they are hunters, and they have substantial knowledge and experience in a broad range of matters that pertain to deer, deer hunting and wildlife and land management. But what sets the Institute's consulting staff apart is more than just knowledge and experience. It's that each Whitetail Consultant loves his work, and that joy comes from a sense of excitement each consultant feels about having a job he considers a pleasure — helping other hunters and managers have more deer, better quality deer and more enjoyable hunts.

The Whitetail Institute's In-House Consultants

John White: Any introduction of the Institute's in-house consult-



Brandon Self



Tyler Holly

ing staff has to begin with the first person to hold the position: John White, the Whitetail Institute's national in-house consulting and sales director. John joined the Whitetail Institute in 1988. Since then, he has helped Whitetail Institute customers with almost any question or situation you can imagine.

"My favorite questions I'm asked are, 'Does this stuff really work?' and, 'Why should I buy Whitetail products when I can get the same thing at my local seed store?'" he said. "Those questions give me the chance to tell them two things. First, I get to tell them about what makes our products different — all the scientific research, the real-world testing, all the hard work we put into our products to make sure they're the best we can make them. Second, it gives me a chance to suggest that they choose any Whitetail Institute product and plant it in the middle of their food plot, choose some other similar type of seed and plant it close to the woods, and watch what the deer do. More often than not, the deer walk through the other stuff to get to the Whitetail Institute product. There's nothing more convincing to a customer than seeing that with his own eyes."

John also manages large tracts for local landowners near his home, and he considers that an important source of his extensive practical knowledge. You can understand why John is the go-to guy when other consultants are trying to assist customers with highly complex or unusual questions and situations.

"We don't get many calls from unhappy customers, but it does happen, helping them is part of my job," he said. "I get a lot of satisfaction from helping solve a customer's problems and getting them happy

again."

Finally, John said he really enjoys the relationships he's built with many customers through the years.

"I love hearing from longstanding customers who not only call to order products two or three times a year but also call every now and then just to chew the fat," he said

In addition to helping callers, John also manages the day-to-day operations of the consulting staff, administers the in-house sales division and performs many other duties that are continually added to his plate because of his experience.

John Frank Deese: John holds a degree in wildlife sciences from Auburn University and managed properties for private landowners before joining Whitetail Institute more than 10 years ago. During the years John Frank spent managing properties, he added substantial practical knowledge to what he had learned in college and is highly experienced in a wide range of land management matters, including food plot systems, planting and maintaining food plots, and conducting controlled burns. In addition, John Frank is also highly knowledgeable about fruit and mast trees, having maintained close contact with his family's tree nursery business.

"One of the things that gives me great pleasure is helping customers who are concerned that they are facing a major food plot issue," he said. "In almost all cases, I can help them think through the problem through a series of specific questions. The payoff is hearing the relief in the customer's voice. I can't tell you how many times customers have told me that they're loyal to Whitetail Institute specifically be-

cause of how we treat and serve our customers.”

As you can probably guess, customers who turn to John Frank for assistance often remark that John Frank is extremely knowledgeable. It's no surprise that his academic credentials and broad practical experience have proved to be a superb platform for his consulting work for the Whitetail Institute. It's something else they regularly say about John Frank, though, that, when combined with his knowledge and talent, make him a perfect fit the Whitetail Institute's business philosophy: When it comes to putting knowledge and experience to work helping hunters and managers, you'll find no one more eager than John Frank.

Brandon Self: When it comes to hands-on experience with deer and food plots, no one has more than Brandon, who has also been with Whitetail Institute for more than a decade. In fact, you'll only find him in his office at the Institute when it's not deer season. During fall and winter he's elsewhere, usually planting food plots, setting up stands and, of course, hunting. In fact, Brandon has so much practical experience that the only way the Institute could lure him onto the consulting staff was to make a special position only during spring and summer.

“My favorite question to be asked is, ‘Why should I plant Whitetail Institute products instead of something else?’” he said. “I love that question because it's answered by Whitetail Institute products themselves — the way they perform. I also enjoy answering questions about general planting directions and maintenance for first-time and long-time customers who have struggled in the past. The most satisfying aspect of my job is when such a customer tells me they're glad they can call a human being for an answer and that they appreciate

the time I give them to help them out. No one wants to punch through a phone keypad to talk to someone and end up talking to no one. I take pride in being able to actually talk to the customer and work through the situation, and I know that if I can help them, I will have a customer for life.”

Perhaps no other in-house consultant has developed more long-term one-on-one relationships with Whitetail Institute customers than Brandon. Reasons include his energy and knowledge, but the biggest seems to be his skill in helping customers solve real-world issues that hunters and managers face designing food plots, food plot systems, and selecting, planting and maintaining forages.

Tyler Holly: Tyler has also been with Whitetail Institute for more than 10 years. He brings a wealth of experience in farming, equipment and land management experience to the consulting team.

“The most rewarding part of being a Whitetail Institute consultant is when a customer you helped years ago or even just a few weeks ago calls back and asks specifically to speak with me,” he said. “It may be someone I helped with choosing the right forage product to plant in a particular food plot. It might be because I helped them with questions about soil preparation. Some customers that ask for me, do so just because they're excited to see that the advice I gave them is paying off. Others that do it say it's because I treated them the way they want to be treated and helped them with good, solid advice. Others even just call to check in and chat because we've developed a friendship over the years.”

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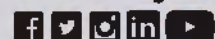


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REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

about Whitetail Institute products...

I was on my way to the hospital to get the news: cancer or no cancer. New York muzzleloader season was open. I told my daughter, Brook, to stay home and go hunting. Mom and I would rather see the doctors alone, and we would share the news, good or bad, when we got home, but please go hunting. The season is only one week long. It was a three-hour drive to the doctor's and we fretted the whole way, since I already had cancer two other times. We expected the worst.

Sitting in the office while the doctor studied the test results, we held tight to the chairs and each other, and prayed. Then the doctor said, "no cancer." Joy is a small word, yet it summed up our feelings of relief and gratitude.

The ride home was much lighter. I decided that I felt well enough to hunt, if we got home in time. Mom drove while I texted Brook with the good news. I said that I would be home soon, and would grab my rifle, and head to the "fallout shelter." She said, "Sorry, I am already there." I said to stay there and I would go to "Lilly's Pad." I no sooner sat down when I heard the shot. The text came before the smoke cleared out in front of her. "OMG! I just shot the 10-point monster." It was a 100-yard shot as he entered the Fusion food plot.

We had been planting and maintaining Whitetail Institute products for eight years. We planted No-Plow and PowerPlant, and maintained Chic Magnet, Fusion, and Imperial Whitetail Clover.

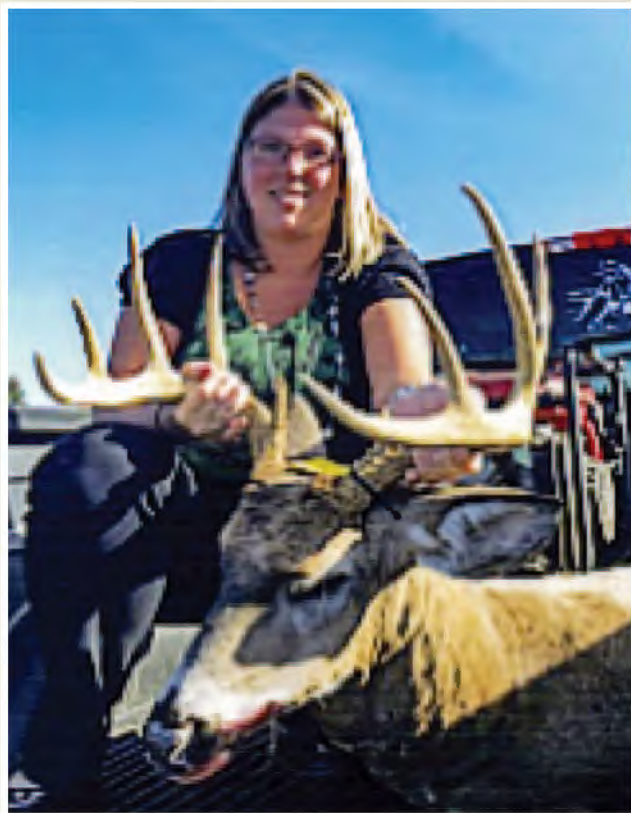
I hopped on the four-wheeler and got to the stand as soon as I could. When I reached her, she was lying on the ground under the stand. I thought she fell out, but she was so overcome by the experience that she had to lie down and settle her nerves. We found the spot where she last saw the deer and saw a small drop of blood. She was not encouraged. The thought of losing any deer, especially such a remarkable buck as this, was abhorrent to her. All ethical hunters share her thoughts. Her husband, Adam, was with us as we tracked the deer to our border.

We have permission to cross the line from our neighbor in such cases, but we always ask before crossing. As it was getting late, we decided to leave it and return the next morning. Brook is a teacher, so she had to go to school in the morning. Restless sleep dogged her all night, and she couldn't concentrate on teaching class the next day. Adam and I waited until good light, and resumed the tracking. Adam saw the buck within 100 yards from our property line. He yelled and hopped around almost like he had shot the deer! We decided to surprise her at school. We took pictures; used the tag she had left with us to tag the deer and field-dressed the buck.

We pulled into the school parking lot, and Adam texted Brook and asked if she could look out the window for a minute. She did not take time to answer. She collected her class. The class next-door followed, and eighth-grade math class joined the march out to see Mrs. VanBrocklin's deer. Already there were two custodians, a bus driver and the school principal. Brook climbed into the back of the truck in her school clothes to admire her deer that she had feared was lost. She posed for pictures and stroked the deer of a lifetime.

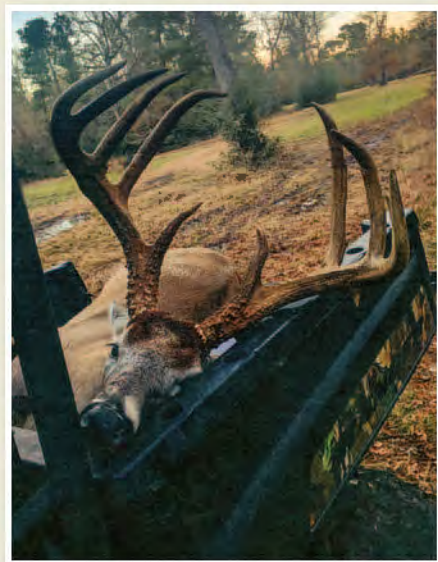
Adam and Brook run five trail cameras we have on our 172 acres of grown-over farmland in northern New York, and we have seen this deer for the past two seasons. This summer and early fall, he has been on every food plot we have. His mistake was being at the fallout shelter while my daughter was on duty. It was certainly a day of good news: no cancer and OMG.

Mark Bennett — New York



Use of Whitetail Institute's Imperial Whitetail Clover, Fusion, Winter-Greens and Tall Tine Tubers has gradually produced more deer and bigger-antlered bucks on our land. Even though we are suffering through CWD, and have had blue tongue issues in the past, our deer are generally healthier than ones we have seen in other places. My grandson, Gabriel, age 9, harvested this buck this past November during the Missouri youth season.

John Sparks — Missouri



I am always impressed with the antler growth of my bucks after they spend the summer eating PowerPlant. Mass, beams and tine length are fantastic. The enclosed picture is of a 9-point taken in early January this past year. He scored 185 inches with 27-inch beams, 6-inch bases and 14-inch G-2's!

Wes Wieder — Texas

Whitetail Institute played a direct role in the harvest of the biggest whitetail buck of my life. This past January, I got my first trail cam photo of the double split G2 buck (photo 1). The buck was eating in my Whitetail Institute food plot.

My friend and neighbor, David, found his sheds and saw the deer regularly during the summer.

I felt my best chance was to provide a good late-



season food source to pull him over post rut. I decided on Whitetail Institute's Ambush product. I planted mid-August and waited for rain. It did not rain until 3-1/2 weeks later. The seed later came up like a champ despite the poor conditions.

There was no sign of him until Dec. 8. It was the late muzzleloader season, and I decided to go to the Ambush food plot. After sitting about an hour, I saw movement and then saw the biggest buck I have ever seen alive walking down the ridge toward me. He walked directly to the food plot and began eating the brassica tops like an all-you-can-eat buffet. I took the shot at 35 yards. When the smoke cleared, he was gone. I was confident of the shot and recovered him only 20 yards into the brush. (Photo 2)

The buck aged at 8 to 9 years and is a 13-pointer and gross scored 176-1/8 by my taxidermist. For Christmas, my neighbor David gave me the shed antlers he had found (Photo 3) the previous spring. What an awesome gift. I hope to be able to do the same for him one day. The big boy is now in my living room allowing me to relive the moment daily. Thank you, Whitetail Institute.

Chris Vellella — Illinois



Imperial Whitetail Clover: Got a lot of nice deer on camera. The two acres that I have planted isn't enough.

Alfa-Rack Plus: I love it, but not as much as the deer. I have a 4-acre and 2-acre plot, and the deer are in them all hours of the day. I have noticed bigger bucks and more deer since planting these food plots.

Tall Tine Tubers: Worked great.

30-06 Mineral/Vitamin Supplements: Really works great. I have a lot of deer coming in on it and enjoying themselves. I got a lot of pictures from using these products.

On Nov. 4 at 4:30 p.m., opening weekend of Minnesota's deer hunting season, I shot this 10-point, piebald buck in central Minnesota. This animal had been spending time in the area feasting on my Alfa-Rack Plus food plots, as evidenced by his picture showing up multiple times on my trail cameras. Thanks, Whitetail Institute.

David Wiederich — Minnesota



This photo is of a buck of which I have four years of trail-cam pics. Up until the last Wednesday in December this past year, I never had a picture of him during daylight during a hunting season. Fortunately, we had a cold front come through, the barometer dropped, and the deer were on their feet a little bit earlier than normal. I had to work late that Wednesday, but my trail cam showed him getting into a Beets & Greens plot just before legal shooting light expired. I got in my setup Thursday afternoon, and at 4:59 p.m. he actually came out in a different section of my field. This time, he stepped into a Pure Attraction plot with several does, but I was able to harvest him. This is the second year in a row, I actually shot my buck while they were standing in a Pure Attraction plot.

As you can see from the photo, he is a giant-bodied deer. Certainly well above average for Pennsylvania. I am convinced this couldn't have been achieved without Whitetail Institute products and the help they have given me. I compare pics with other people throughout the year, and our deer are visibly bigger. Whitetail Institute products and customer service helped me lay this deer down, and I thank them. I will definitely be in touch over the winter to finalize my upcoming planting plan for next season.

Mike Davis — Pennsylvania

(Continued on page 71)

Hunting with Dad...

The man behind the bow

By Scott Bestul

Photo by the Author

Just as he did the previous year, my father killed a mature whitetail buck during Minnesota's archery season this past fall. The hunt story was relatively ho-hum; a pretty 10-point buck showed up 45 minutes before dusk, worked a scrape line down a logging road and, in the process, walked within 25 yards of the ladder stand where my dad waited patiently. Dad leveled his crossbow, took careful aim and made the shot. The buck trotted 25 yards, sensing something strange had happened, and then toppled over like he'd been deflated.





MUZZY

BROADHEADS



BAD TO THE BONE

“The focus of the picture is not the mature buck with a pair of tree limbs stuck on its head. The critical element is the guy behind the whitetail; the man who took me to the woods many years ago and, in the process, showed me many things of far greater importance than simply being a good deer hunter.”

Of course, being directly related to an outdoor writer armed with a camera, Dad knew he'd have a photo of himself and his buck plastered across text messages, social media and emails that would reach far beyond the small slice of southeastern Minnesota he calls home. And not surprisingly, this photo inspired comments of support and encouragement, most of which my father would never see. When you are 88 and care nothing about fame, you shoot deer for the right reason: You love the adventure and excitement of deer hunting, and see the process as one more method to connect with the people who matter most to you.

So yeah, I'm proud as heck of my father and love to pump him up to as many people as possible by showing them Dad-and-big-deer photos. But what I really wish I could show them are the things not visible in a picture. Because for every grip-and-grin hero shot, I should showcase the effort leading to that moment.

Take, for example, this fall's buck, which Dad shot from a two-man ladder stand. He and I hauled that stand piece by piece over the 700 yards of rough ground separating my truck from the white oak we knew would be a killer spot. After transporting all that steel, we had to complete the assembly, tip the beast up and strap it against the tree trunk. Then there were shooting lanes to clear and entry trails to cut. All this on a warm early-summer day when the smart people were enjoying air conditioning, porch-sitting or manning a seat in a bass boat.

It gets better. We decided we could sweeten the deal at that spot by adding a water source. Ponds, especially those in timber, are a huge attractant for deer in this hilly country, as the only water sources are trout streams (on the valley bottom) or conservation ponds (out in farm fields to conserve water and battle erosion). So, I bought a hard fiberglass tub, and Dad and I dragged it and a pair of shovels back to the ladder stand. I shot a couple of pics of us after we'd dug enough of the heavy clay soil to slide that pond in and then back-fill it to make it look natural. We might have looked wetter if we'd dove in the water with our clothes on, but I doubt it.

The thing is, Dad displays that kind of effort on any deer project I undertake. Doesn't matter if it's a spring clover planting, summer weed spraying, winter hinge cutting or fall stand-hanging. He's there and wearing a smile. Oh, and I almost forgot: Those deer he shoots? He lets me field-dress 'em, because I'm slightly faster and actually like to do it, but he insists on helping with transporting the carcass out of the timber. The last two bucks he's killed have required at least a quarter-mile drag, much of it uphill and across rugged ground. Was I worried about a heart attack? You bet, but not his.

Part of Dad's physical prowess is genetic; His dad (my grandpa) died just shy of his 102nd birthday and remained lean to the end. But Dad isn't taking anything for granted. He lifts weights three days a week, a member of a dedicated trio that rarely misses a workout. Dad is "the middle child" of this group. The youngster is 74, and the senior is 93. They visit the local high school weight room and dive right in with the football players, many of whom know the old-timers and greet them by their first names.

Dad's also a walker, taking almost daily hikes that cover several

miles, often up and down steep hills. This past winter, during a cold snap when temps stayed sub-zero for several days and snow blanketed the landscape, I called Dad to see how things were going. "Everything's fine," he said. "But I feel a little guilty. I've driven to the post office to get the mail the last couple of days. I guess I'm feeling kind of wimpy with this weather."

It should be noted that my folks' house is just more than a mile from the post office, a route Dad walks six days most weeks — unless, of course, below-zero days make him feel "wimpy."

So yeah, my dad is an age-defying physical specimen. But of course, that fact would be meaningless if he were not a good human being. I'm here to attest that he's not only a fine and decent man, but — allowing for some understandable prejudice — he's perhaps the kindest and most generous person I've ever met. The proof of this runs from the specific (Dad's part of a group of retired men that help out at his church every Wednesday, volunteering for projects as simple as grounds cleanup to those as vigorous as sheet-rocking, roofing and general construction repair), to the general (Dad's general response to anyone in need is, "I don't know that I can help, but I will try."). This attitude, coupled with Dad's proficiency with power tools and his ability to fix things, makes him a valued commodity in the small town he calls home.

The fact that he kills bucks on a semi-consistent basis is actually kind of an accident. Because my father views recreation as a mostly-selfish activity ("Why do something fun for myself when I could chip in a few hours for someone who truly needs me?"), Pops actually hunts only when I insist he should.

"Dad, we should go sit in a tree tonight," I'll say during an autumn phone call. There will be a long pause, in which I assume he's weighing the value of helping a) humanity in general, and b) his son in particular. And if there's not a widow in crisis or a church project that needs doing that day, he will say, "Well, I guess I could do that, if your mom doesn't need me for something."

And even then, on those glorious fall afternoons that seem to be made for nothing more than deer hunting, Dad will revel in an outing where whitetails don't even enter the equation. "Did you see that sunset tonight?" he'll say enthusiastically when we meet at the truck. Or he'll chortle about a chickadee that roosted on his quiver, or gush over the flock of turkeys that scratched in front of a stand I'd hung for killing a giant whitetail.

"What a great day to sit in the woods," Dad will say, content to simply be out there.

But of course, I'm giddy when a great buck strolls within bow range of my father's stand, and he makes the perfect shot that lets me send pics to my friends, bragging that my dad has tagged another whitetail most men half his age would be proud to kill. What my buddies don't get is this: The focus of that picture is not the mature buck with a pair of tree limbs stuck on its head. The critical element is the guy behind the whitetail; the man who took me to the woods many years ago and, in the process, showed me many things of far greater importance than simply being a good deer hunter. 🦌

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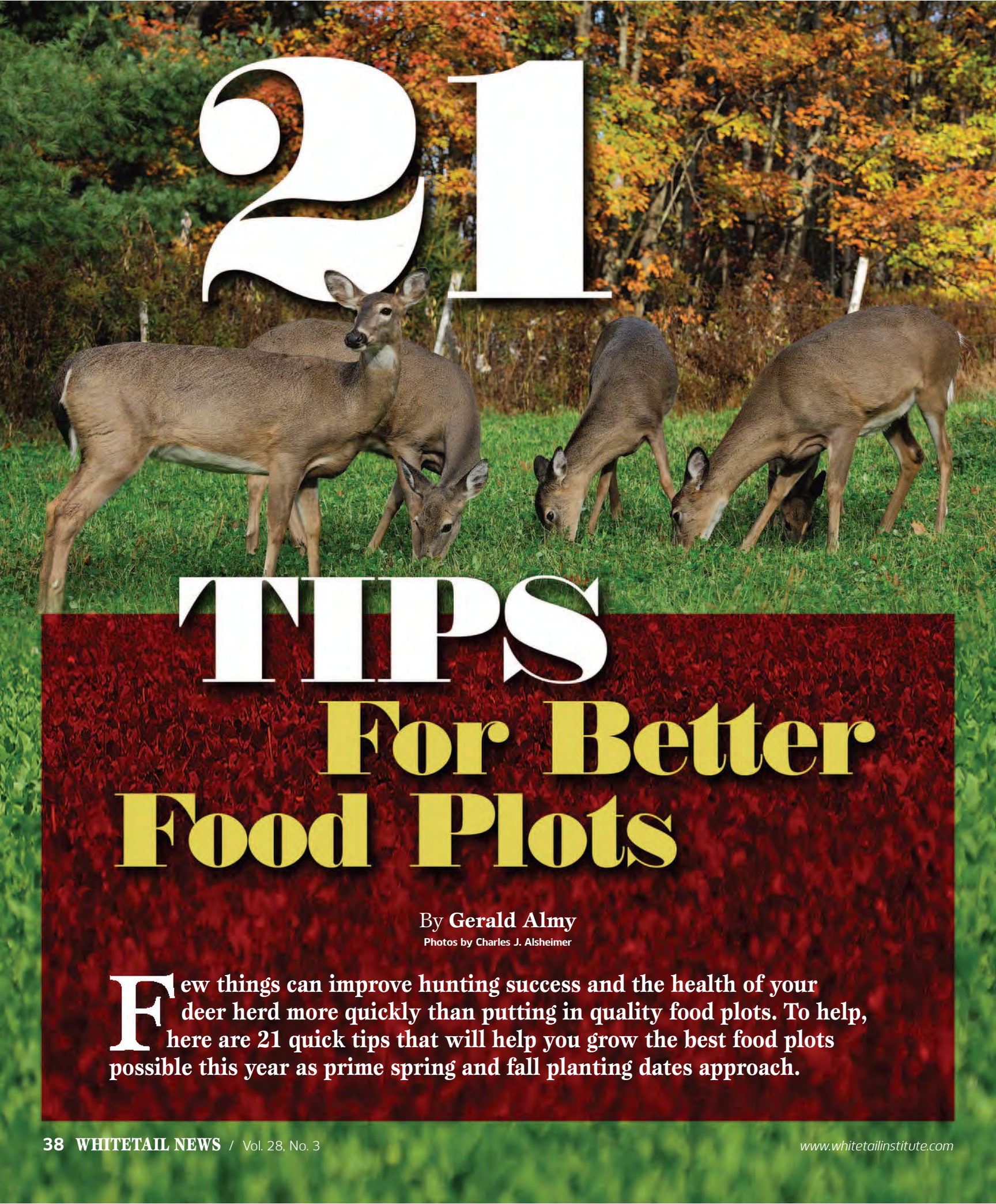
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21

TIPS For Better Food Plots

By **Gerald Almy**

Photos by Charles J. Alsheimer

Few things can improve hunting success and the health of your deer herd more quickly than putting in quality food plots. To help, here are 21 quick tips that will help you grow the best food plots possible this year as prime spring and fall planting dates approach.

1. Do a soil test. This will tell you how much fertilizer you need, including nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. If you don't do a test, you might use too much fertilizer or too little. Your test will also tell you how much lime (if any) you need to bring the soil into a neutral range (6.5 to 7.0). If it's not in that range, your plants cannot absorb the available nutrients and grow well. If soils are too acidic or too alkaline, critical nutrients become chemically bound in the soil and are unavailable to the growing plants, stunting their growth.

The Whitetail Institute sells inexpensive soil testing kits that are easy to read. Farm co-ops also offer soil testing. If you can't do a test, add at least one or two tons of lime per acre every couple of years, and use all-around fertilizer, such as 17-17-17. But there's no reason not to do a soil test.

2. Plant some feeding plots and some hunting plots. Keep the hunting plots tucked near good bedding cover, where an old buck can slip in feeling secure using them in daylight. Make the feeding ones larger. Those are great spots for surveying the deer population with trail cameras and improving the health of your whitetails.

3. Locate plots where they're not visible from roads and property boundaries so you don't tempt neighbors or poachers.

4. If you only have a small amount of land for plots, mixtures with several varieties of plants that deer like will work best. By doing this you will guarantee there's something that will appeal to every deer's taste buds. The various plants will also reach peak growth and nutrition levels at different times. Pure Attraction — a blend of Whitetail Oats Plus, Peas and WINA brassica — is a prime example.

5. Follow the natural contours of the land. Those are the fea-

tures deer follow. Plots don't have to be rectangular or square.

6. If cover is lacking near your plot site, plant Conceal next to it or leading to it from nearby bedding cover. This offers cover that will make older bucks feel more secure using the plot during shooting hours.

7. Rotate your crops. This is especially important for brassicas, which should not be grown at the same site more than two consecutive years.

8. Plant something different than crops grown locally by farmers. They can probably do a better job with those crops. You need something unique to attract deer to your land — something they don't find in large quantities all around them. Example: Local farmers grow alfalfa and corn. You should plant Winter-Greens and Imperial Whitetail Clover, etc.

9. Try to plant before a light rain but not a downpour that could wash some of the seeds away and make for uneven plant growth.

10. Make sure to kill existing vegetation such as grasses and weeds thoroughly before planting. Spray several times if necessary, using herbicides such as glyphosate, the main ingredient in Roundup. Then disc or till several times to kill remaining vegetation. You can also flip the order and till first, and then kill remaining and newly sprouted vegetation with herbicides.

11. Consider wind, sun direction and surrounding cover when you plant so you can approach your plots without being detected. A plot won't be nearly as productive if you can't get to it without spooking deer.

12. As a rule, if you are planting clover or alfalfa, add little

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or no nitrogen to the food plots. Clover and alfalfa produce their own nitrogen and adding more only promotes weed growth.

13. Remove all rocks and debris before planting, and then till repeatedly. You need a smooth, firm seedbed for the best crop. If planting small seeds such as clover, alfalfa, chicory or brassica, culti-pack before and after spreading the seeds so you get good soil-to-seed contact but don't cover the small seeds too deep.

14. Don't cover small seeds too deeply. You'll smother them. Brassicas and clovers should only be planted 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep. Larger seeds, such as those in Power Plant and Whitetail Oats Plus, can be planted 1/2 to 1 inch deep.

15. Plant some kill plots along a buck's travel route from bedding cover toward major evening feeding areas. These make great early-season bow-hunting locations.

16. Find spots that are level or only slightly sloping. Too much slope can cause the seed to wash off after planting and the soil to erode during heavy rains.

17. Don't skimp and buy cheap seeds. Buying a high-quality seed ensures you'll get the best results from the time and energy you put into growing your plots.

18. Don't bite off more than you can handle. It's better to put in three acres of high-quality food plots and do them right than it is to stretch your time, energy and finances and try to plant six or seven acres.

19. Plant a variety of products. Some will reach peak nutrition and palatability levels at various times.

20. Don't overhunt your plots. Nothing can ruin a plot for attracting mature bucks during daylight more than applying too much pressure. Rest them for days between hunts and enter and exit your stand undetected if possible.

21. Keep a notebook or log of what you plant and where. Note how the plants fare and how well deer use them to learn what works best on your property. 🦌



Frost Seeding Enhances Perennial Performance and Longevity

Here, a land manager frosts seeds a plot in late March.

with it), which brings the seeds and soil into optimum contact.

Are some food plot locations better candidates for frost seeding than others? Yes. As a general rule, the best locations for frost seeding are plots that present the lowest chance that rain and runoff from melting snow will wash the seed away. Slightly sloped plots, for example, are better candidates than valleys with highly sloped sides and low places that channel water. That's not to say that frost seeding a food plot in a valley won't be successful, it's just that you don't know what Mother Nature will throw at you, and sites that aren't naturally subjected to heavy surface water movement are less problematic for frost seeding than those that are. That's just one example of the many variables that can affect how successful frost seeding is in a situation, and why it's impossible to list a set of specific conditions during which frost seeding will always be successful.

Benefits of frost seeding: Frost seeding can be a great way to fill in areas of a perennial food plot that are thin because of excessive browsing pressure or adverse weather, get a jump on spring grass and weed competition, and extend the life of older perennial plantings for another year or two. Remember, though, that frost seeding can't be used to extend the life of a perennial food plot indefinitely. Eventually, any food plot site will need a break from even the best food plot planting if it's been growing continuously at that site for many years. Most often, the need for a crop rotation to help clean out the soil becomes evident from a noticeable decline in the general quality of the stand. When you see that that happening, it will be time to bite the bullet, work the seedbed up from scratch and plant a rotational crop to freshen the soil by conducting this critical rotation.

Seed selection and seeding rates: Clover and chicory are among the most highly preferred seeds for frost seeding. Of these, clover is arguably the best choice because, unlike chicory, it tends to germinate at a temperature lower than that required for most native grass and weed seeds to germinate. That can give it a jump on the competition and help crowd out weeds, an especially beneficial characteristic in perennial plots that are thin at the end of winter.

The normal seeding rate for Imperial Whitetail Clover is 8 pounds per acre. It's 3 pounds per acre for Chic Magnet perennial forage chicory. (You can find the recommended seeding rate for each White-tail Institute food plot product on the front of the product bag.) Also, follow these seeding rates when frost seeding.

Whitetail Institute perennials are designed to last for three to five years or more from one planting. The best way to ensure that you get maximum attraction and longevity out of them is to follow the Whitetail Institute's seedbed-preparation, planting and forage-maintenance instructions for the product you select.

What is frost seeding? Frost seeding is a long-standing agricultural practice used by farmers to help rejuvenate or extend the life of a field or pasture. It's accomplished by broadcasting small, hard seeds such as clover and chicory into existing fields or pastures in the late winter/early spring, when ground that has been thoroughly frozen begins a cycle of thawing during the day and refreezing at night. As the cycle continues, the soil heaves (surface ice expands upward, carrying soil

Although it's not a required maintenance step for Whitetail Institute perennials, frost seeding can help extend the performance and longevity of an existing perennial planting in several ways — for example, by helping you recover portions of the food plot that are thin because of intense browsing or adverse weather. Frost seeding can also help with weed control and can even extend the life of the planting for a few more growing seasons. In short, although frost seeding isn't required, it's an additional tool that can yield a wide range of benefits.



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By Whitetail Institute Staff

Photo by Dustin Reid

If you want the bucks you hunt next fall to have bigger racks, make sure they have access to the minerals and vitamins they need during the 200-day antler-growing window of spring and summer. To get the most out of the antler-growing window, though, make sure you indirectly promote antler growth during the rest of the year as well. Imperial Whitetail 30-06 nutritional supplements for deer are scientifically designed and professionally formulated to help you do just that.



Genetic Potential

Before we get into nutritional supplementation to improve antler size, let's make sure we're on the same page about why that's possible. In most free-range situations, bucks have the genetic potential to grow larger, heavier antlers. That means if the genetic blueprints of bucks in your area set the maximum possible antler size at 165 inches, then absent a freak, they'll never grow antlers of 200 inches. In most free-range situations, though, bucks don't carry antlers anywhere near their maximum genetic potential. The limiting factors are primarily age and nutrition.

Age and nutrition are cut and dried. A buck cannot grow his biggest set of antlers until he's mature (about 5.5 to 7.5 years old) and unless he has protein and the minerals and vitamins in the forms and ratios he needs to do so. Unfortunately, although Mother Nature usually provides sufficient nutrition for bucks to grow antlers she usually provides nowhere near enough for deer to max out on antler size. In such situations, properly formulated mineral and vitamin supplementation is a must.

The 200-Day Antler-Growing Window of Spring and Summer

During spring and summer, protein, minerals and vitamins are especially important to the entire deer herd — to does in the third trimester of pregnancy and, later, when they're producing milk for their newborn fawns. Research has shown that does provided with a high-quality diet during pregnancy can drop healthier, larger fawns and produce more milk, and that larger fawns often maintain their size advantage into adulthood. Here, though, I'll stick with just bucks and antler development.

Bucks grow antlers about 200 days during spring and summer. This 200-day antler-growing window might start and stop at slightly different times in different areas of North America, but it always lasts for about 200 days. When you think about it, that's an incredibly brief period in which to grow antlers.

Antler composition: When a buck starts growing new antlers in late winter or early spring, he starts by building the velvet antler, which primarily consists of the protein, collagen. When the hardening process starts, the buck deposits minerals on the collagen matrix of the velvet antler, a process called mineralization. A hardened antler is about 45 percent protein and 55 percent minerals, so you can see how important minerals are. Logic dictates these components must come from somewhere, right? Logic is correct. Bucks obtain them from two main sources: their skeletal systems through osteoporosis and their diet.

Imperial Whitetail 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein: The Whitetail Institute's 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein Mineral/Vitamin supplements are scientifically designed for the needs of deer during spring and summer. They are scientifically formulated with essential macro and trace minerals along with vitamins A, D and E during spring and

summer to help deer stay healthy and improve body weights and lactation, and to help bucks reach more of their genetic potential in antler growth. Antler Up D3 increases calcium and phosphorous uptake to promote growth and development of antlers. 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein are designed for use in ground sites.

As similar as 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein are in terms of the nutrition they offer, the products differ in several ways. One is protein content. 30-06 Plus Protein contains a 10 percent protein boost. Second, 30-06 is available in granular and block form, and 30-06 Plus Protein is only available in granular form. Third, the products differ somewhat in their texture and the taste enhancers each uses to attract deer. Accordingly, although deer usually hit all 30-06 products with a vengeance, these alternative options can help you tailor spring and summer mineral and vitamin delivery for your requirements and the preferences of your deer by testing each and determining which they prefer most.

The Other 165 Days of The Year

If bucks grow antlers during a 200-day period, it stands to reason they are not growing antlers during the remaining days of the year, right? Right, but that does not mean you can ignore the rest of the year if you expect to maximize antler growth.

To maximize herd health, body weights, fawn size, milk production and antler size, you need to provide your deer with properly formulated nutritional supplementation year-round. The critical understanding is that a buck will always prioritize nutrition after winter. The first thing he will do is recover his body weight and other health losses, and he will do that before devoting more nutrition to antler growth. Accordingly, by helping your deer reduce winter health losses and recover from losses they sustain as quickly as possible, the sooner they'll nutritionally prioritize antler growth in the antler-growing window.

Imperial Whitetail 30-06 Thrive: Thrive brings the Whitetail Institute's line of 30-06 products full circle by helping deer maintain body weight and overall health during fall and winter. During these seasons, the rut, dwindling food sources and energy-sapping winter weather can take a heavy toll on deer health, and bucks can lose up to 20 percent of their body weight. 30-06 Thrive is scientifically formulated with a specific balance of energy, protein, mineral and vitamin components to help deer maintain body weight and overall health during fall and winter. It's nutrient-dense for winter stamina, helps deer maintain muscle mass and helps replenish critical minerals and vitamins. It also includes antioxidant nutrients that help deer maintain a healthy digestive system and aid in muscle and tissue recovery. 30-06 Thrive also contains Devour, the Whitetail Institute's exclusive scent and flavor enhancer, which is extremely attractive to deer.

Caution: Imperial Whitetail 30-06 supplements are so attractive to deer that some states consider them bait, so be sure to consult your local game laws before using or hunting over a 30-06 site.

For information about Imperial Whitetail 30-06 supplements, go to whitetailinstitute.com, or call the Whitetail Institute at (800) 688-3030. 🦌

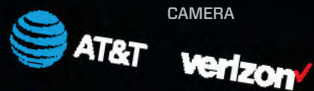
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Whitetail Institute **RECORD BOOK BUCKS...**



Tom Dial – Illinois

We have had great results with Whitetail Institute products for over 20 years. We use Imperial Whitetail Clover, Pure Attraction and Ambush. We've killed many record-book bucks over the years, including two Boone-and-Crockett-class bucks. Last season was the first time we've used Ambush, and the deer and the turkeys have been hitting it hard as well. This past year, I killed my best buck ever. He is a 16-point and scored 175 inches. (Photo 1) I've also enclosed a photo of my son Andrew's 146-inch bow kill. Thanks, Whitetail Institute.

Matt Gayle – Ohio

This past spring, I purchased a 5-foot tiller and with help from my dad and his tractor, what was once a day dream had finally become a reality. I purchased a bag of Imperial Whitetail Clover and a bag of Fusion, and after a long day in the field we had finished two Whitetail Institute food plots.

June and July provided plenty of rain for the plots and it wasn't long before the plots were up and growing. My area of southeastern Ohio was suffering from drought conditions in August and September but the plots showed very little signs of stress from this. With the season starting in late September, I started checking trail cam pics, and I'll have to admit I was a little discouraged. All I had was plots full of does and a few small bucks. But as we all know, come November, if you hold the does, the bucks will soon be there also. Even with all the neighboring bean fields, the deer were keying into my Whitetail Institute plots. I was fortunate enough to harvest this Ohio brute on Nov. 10. He green scored 170-1/8 inches gross. As you can tell, I'm a believer in Whitetail Institute products.



Casey Moe – North Dakota

A few years ago *Whitetail News* published a story about a 159-7/8-inch buck I killed on my Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot. It made my day! I'd like to say thank you and that I harvested another great deer using Whitetail Institute products!

I passed up a shooter buck on Sept. 9 two years ago, just minutes before I harvested the 159-7/8 buck I called Cecil.

The night I shot the deer I called Cecil, I passed up a deer I called the Fat Five as I knew he was only 3-1/2 years old but supported a pretty nice heavy, massive rack. This past season I decided he would be a mature deer I would chase. Thousands of pictures of him using 30-06 Mineral sites, food plots, bait piles and scrapes led me into a half-acre Imperial Whitetail Clover plot he was frequently visiting in the daylight.

With no luck for the first few sits, I changed plans and set sights on a deer I called Rock Star — a 5-1/2-year-old 180-inch typical 7-by-7 with split G2s because he started showing up in the daylight in a hay field over a 30-06 mineral site. I sat waiting for Rock Star to appear but he never did. Instead, the Fat Five appeared and headed my way. I drew back and arrowed him at 23 yards in the same spot I passed him up the year before. After a 200-yard tracking job, my girlfriend, a few friends and I finally laid hands on him.

He is a 152-1/2-inch heavy-antlered 5-by-5.

He loved the Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion plots we planted and also loved to use the 30-06 and the 30-06 Plus Protein mineral sites.

Robin Leatherman – Missouri

Could this be real? I had a job opportunity of a lifetime: the chance to reclaim and re-habitat land that had been sorely neglected for many years and turn it into prime hunting ground. Plus, the gig came with hunting rights. Heaven! I went to work right away, evaluating the lay of the land and terrain to determine the best spots for food plots.

Being a long-time fan of Whitetail Institute and having used their products since the 1990s, there was no doubt whose products I would use for this project. The question was, which Whitetail Institute products? The soil is rocky, not that great for growing things, and it was a super dry year. Plus, the ground had not been worked in more than 20 years — if ever! I called Whitetail Institute for a consultation. (Actually, I called them many times for consultations and the guys were awesome every time.) We came up with a plan for what to plant, including ratios and timing. We determined that it was best to plant Imperial Whitetail Clover with Whitetail Oats Plus as a cover crop, planting half-rate on the oat seeds and full-rate on the clover seeds, and I placed my order.

I prepped the soil with the correct amount of lime and fertilizer and patiently waited for favorable weather conditions. The soil was ready. I was ready. But the weather wasn't ready. Finally, rain was actually in the forecast for the first time in more than a month. I went to work getting the seeds planted and the rains came.

Both food plots had growth and coverage within two weeks. I started seeing more deer than I ever thought possible on the 275-acre property. Food plots that had never existed on this property were now a primary attractant because of the Imperial Whitetail Clover and Whitetail Oats Plus. In fact, the game cameras were capturing up to 30 turkeys and 15 deer in the food plots. Both food plots were getting browsed down to stubs. To the stubs! I was concerned all the wildlife would overbrowse it, especially because acorns were sparse that season. (It has held up to all the use and abuse of these critters so far.)

On Nov. 7, I had the perfect southeast wind for my ground blind. I entered my blind from the back approach so as not to get busted or spook any deer. Once I quietly settled into my blind, I started seeing deer. I saw about a 20-inch wide 8-pointer, a few smaller bucks, several does and fawns and at least 15 turkeys. Everyone was in the food plot! I was very surprised by all the activity. I am really into quality deer management, so I passed up all those deer I was seeing so they could grow and get some age on them. I was waiting for a larger buck.

Conditions were right again on Nov. 9 and I was back in my blind at 3:30 p.m. Again, I saw all kinds of turkey and deer activity. Then, I saw the one. He came out of the woods chasing a doe. He gave me a great shot with my bow at 41 yards. This buck was beautiful. He was a non-typical 14-point buck with a double main beam on the left side. It was one of my largest bucks ever, and I was shaking with excitement. What a deer! (Photo 1)

When rifle season came in, I hunted from the same blind for three straight days, passing up many nice bucks every day.

From observing all those deer on previous days, I noticed they all seemed to have a pattern of going back into the woods and then coming out at a certain place at the end of the food plot. I hoped a mature buck would follow a similar pattern. I stayed alert and watchful. Then, there he was! He came back out at the end of the food plot — just like the deer had done in the days prior.

Again, what a deer! He was an amazing 8-point typical deer that measured out around 146 inches. What a symmetrical rack, and what a trophy. Both deer were taken within 100 yards of each other in the same food plot.

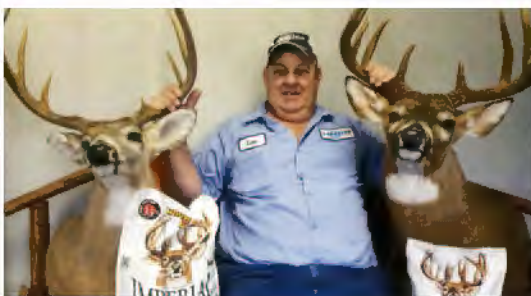
With the help of Whitetail Institute's guidance, recommendations and amazing products, I had the great fortune to harvest these two beautiful deer. I plan to plant more food plots using Whitetail Institute products next year, and continue to maintain those I planted this year.

I will be practicing some more patience and waiting for the right conditions because next year, I hope to get the buck that I've seen on the game cameras that dwarfs these two. Wish me luck!



Leon Vandyke – Virginia

I have approximately 10 acres planted in Imperial Whitetail Clover. Each fall, some additional areas are planted using No-Plow. Our tract of land is surrounded on three sides by a national forest. These food plots are drawing deer onto our property, and the Imperial Whitetail Clover is the main reason we are seeing all of these nice, healthy, mature bucks. The food plots have proven themselves by the trophy bucks we've taken (see photos). We appreciate the proven products we get from Whitetail Institute. 🦌



Send Us Your Photos!

Do you have photos of a buck that qualifies for the Pope & Young, Boone and Crockett or your state record books that you grew or took with the help of Imperial products? Send it to us and you might find it in the Record Book Bucks section of the next issue of *Whitetail News*. Email your digital photos and a 3 to 4 paragraph story telling how you harvested the deer and the role our products played to

info@whitetailinstitute.com
or send them to:

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

Arrest MAX and Slay:

Answers to Common Questions

By Whitetail Institute Staff



Treated

Whitetail Institute perennial food plot products are designed to last for multiple years from a single planting. However, to make sure you get maximum quality, production and longevity from your perennials, make sure you control unwanted grasses and other weeds that appear in spring. The Whitetail Institute's Arrest MAX and Slay herbicides are excellent for controlling grass and broadleaf weeds, respectively, and they're specifically designed for food plots.



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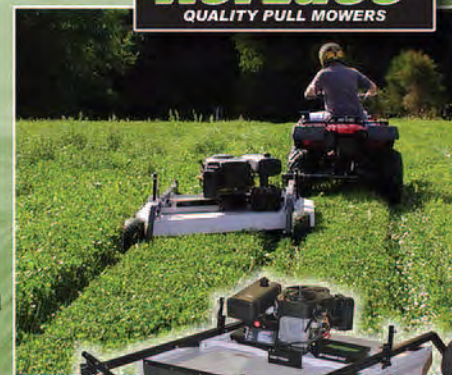
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weed control in three ways. The first is cultural weed control: Uniform crop growth is the single most powerful form of weed control in any cropping system, including food plots. Forage selection, proper soil fertility (particularly soil pH), seedbed preparation, seeding rate, and overall growing conditions are cultural practices that provide weed control benefits of troublesome weeds. The second is physical (or mechanical) weed control: anything you can physically do to remove a weed or interfere with its ability to reproduce, such as mowing the food plot to prevent flowering and reseeding. The third is chemical: using non-selective herbicides such as Roundup® during seedbed preparation if needed, and selective herbicides such as Arrest MAX and/or Slay if needed and appropriate to

the forage being maintained.

By now, most folks already know that Arrest MAX and Slay are selective herbicides designed to control grasses and many other weeds as part of yearly maintenance of perennial forage stands. Below, you'll find brief answers to common questions about Arrest MAX and Slay. Remember, though, that the only source of information concerning the selection and use of a herbicide you can be absolutely certain is correct and complete is the herbicide label included as part of the herbicide's packaging, so read and understand it before using Arrest MAX, Slay or any other herbicide.

The Arrest MAX and Slay labels are also available online. To find the Arrest MAX and Slay labels, go to whitetailinstitute.com, and click on the products tab in the header. Then, scroll down, click on herbicides and then click on Arrest MAX or Slay. You'll find a link to that herbicide's label in the middle of the page.

What are Arrest MAX and Slay? Arrest MAX and Slay are selective herbicides, meaning they're designed to kill or damage certain types of grassy and other weeds without harming certain crops. Arrest MAX controls most kinds of grass. Slay controls most kinds of broadleaf-type weeds and some heavier sedge-type grasses that Arrest MAX isn't designed to handle.

What is Surefire Crop Oil Plus? Surefire Crop Oil Plus is a tank additive designed for use with Arrest MAX and Slay. It helps the herbicide stick to targeted plants. Surefire is vegetable-based, not petroleum-based like some other agricultural oils. It also contains an anti-foaming agent to help users correctly mix the spray tank.

Although adding Surefire to the Arrest MAX spray tank is not required, doing so can help Arrest MAX do an even better job of controlling tough perennial or mature grasses. An adjuvant such as Surefire must be tank-mixed into the Slay spray solution by the user for Slay to work.

Are chemicals such as Arrest MAX and Slay the only weed-control options for perennial-forage maintenance? Absolutely not. In fact, if you consider Arrest MAX and Slay as stand-alone weed-control options, the results of your weed-control efforts will surely be less than optimum. Instead, chemical weed control should be considered as only one potential tool within a wider multi-approach strategy for keeping weeds in check.

Specifically, an effective weed-management plan will approach

the forage being maintained.

This concept is beautifully explained in one of the most educational and popular articles that has appeared in Whitetail News: "Integrated Weed Management," by the Whitetail Institute's Weed and Herbicide Scientist Dr. Carroll Johnson. The article was published in *Whitetail News* Volume 18, No. 3, on Page 30. You can also find it at issuu.com/whitetailinstitute/docs/wn18.3/30. If you've never read it before, I urge you to do so.

Can Arrest MAX or Slay be used to clear weeds from a food plot site before planting? Arrest MAX and Slay aren't designed for that. Both are selective herbicides, meaning they are only designed to control the weeds listed on the herbicide labels. Also, unlike Arrest MAX, Slay leaves a weed-killing residual in the soil that, according to the Slay label, will delay a site sprayed with Slay from being replanted for a time that varies based on the crop to be planted. Non-selective herbicides (meaning herbicides that kill or damage every plant they touch) such as glyphosate are a better option for clearing a seedbed before planting.

What Whitetail Institute food plot products are approved for spraying with Arrest MAX and Slay? Arrest MAX is labeled for use in any Whitetail Institute perennial and these Whitetail Institute annuals: PowerPlant, Beets & Greens, Winter-Greens, Tall Tine Tubers and Turkey Select Chufa. Slay is labeled for use in Imperial Whitetail Clover and in any other clover or alfalfa stand.

Is it OK to spray Arrest MAX on approved forages even when they're very young? Yes. When used as directed, Arrest MAX will not harm Whitetail Institute perennials, PowerPlant, Beets & Greens, Winter-Greens, Tall Tine Tubers or Turkey Select Chufa even when the planting is very young.

When is the best time to spray Arrest MAX and Slay? The best time to spray Arrest MAX and Slay is right after spring green-up, when grasses and weeds are still young but are actively growing (visibly increasing in height). As with any rule, though, there are exceptions. For example, some cool-season weeds such as chickweed might need to be sprayed with Slay in fall. Also, Slay should not be sprayed on newly planted forages.

Is it OK to spray Slay on approved forages even when they're very young? No. Slay should not be sprayed until the forage plants

are no longer in the seedling stage. For example, newly planted clover should not be sprayed with Slay until all of the clover plants are at least three inches tall and all their leaves have unfolded.

Will Arrest MAX kill all kinds of grass? No. Arrest MAX will control most kinds of grass but not all. Arrest MAX also won't control broadleaf weeds, woody weeds or vines. The Arrest MAX label provides a list of the grasses Arrest MAX is designed to control. Slay will control some of the heavier sedge-type grasses that Arrest MAX isn't designed to control, and those are listed on the Slay label.

Will Slay kill all non-grassy weeds? No. Slay will control most kinds of broadleaf weeds but not all. Slay will also control a few of the heavier sedge-type grasses that Arrest MAX isn't designed to control. Slay won't control most kinds of grasses, and it won't control woody weeds or vines. The Slay label provides a list of the weeds Slay is designed to control.

Should I mow the food plot before spraying Arrest MAX and/or Slay? In most cases, no. That's because mowing causes grasses and weeds to stop active growth for a few days, and if they're sprayed during that time, they won't take in the herbicides. Also, Arrest MAX can control taller grasses well, especially if Surefire Crop Oil Plus is added to the Arrest MAX spray tank.

An exception occurs if you'll be spraying Arrest MAX and Slay together in a spray tank and grasses are tall enough they might physically block the spray solution from reaching the broadleaf weeds you're trying to control with Slay. In that case, mow the grasses to a height just higher than the weeds, and wait until you see the grass actively increasing in height again (usually about a week) before spraying.

How long will it take for Arrest MAX and Slay to work? Generally, the sprayed weeds should start to slow growth right away, and you should start to see evidence of weed death within a few weeks. Again, though, that's generally. Lots of variables can affect how long it takes Arrest MAX and Slay to work in certain situations. A big example is whether the treated weeds were actively growing when sprayed. Another is whether or not the mixing instructions for the herbicide were followed. Slay, for example, can't work if the user fails to add an adjuvant such as Surefire Crop Oil Plus into the Slay spray tank. One sign that Arrest MAX is working is that grasses being affected by it often turn a deep reddish-purple color.

When should I use Surefire Crop Oil Plus? The only time adding an adjuvant such as Surefire to the spray tank is required is if you'll be spraying Slay. Adding an adjuvant to the Slay spray tank is required for Slay to work. Surefire can also help Arrest MAX control tougher perennial or mature grasses even better. Surefire can also boost the performance of other herbicides, such as glyphosate.

Can I find simplified instructions for mixing the Arrest MAX and Slay spray solutions online? Yes. Go to whitetailinstitute.com, click on the products tab in the header. Then, scroll down, and click on herbicides, and then click on either Arrest MAX or Slay. You'll find a link to recommended herbicide mix rates in the middle of the page.

As mentioned, Arrest MAX and Slay are highly effective weed-control tools that, like any tool, must be used correctly to do the job for which they are designed. The herbicide labels are your source for comprehensive information about the selection and use of Arrest MAX and Slay, so read and understand them. If you have questions about Arrest MAX or Slay, call the Whitetail Institute before you spray. 🦌

Ensure the success of your food plots.

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

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How often have you read that statement in *Whitetail News*? You'll find it somewhere in almost every issue. The reason? It's true. Soil testing is the most important step in ensuring food plot success.



One thing all food plotters have in common is they want their food plots to grow vigorously and be lush, healthy and attractive to deer. Most of us also want to eliminate wasted expenses from our hunting budgets. There is only one tool that will help you accomplish both: a laboratory soil test.

For your food plot plants to flourish, they must have access to sufficient nutrients. Plants get some of the nutrients they need from the soil. Most soils, though, lack one or more essential nutrients, and fertilizer must be added at planting to bring levels to optimum range. Most soils are also low in soil pH, a condition that prevents high-quality food plot plantings from freely accessing nutrients in the soil. In such cases, lime must be added to the seedbed to raise soil pH before planting.

Regarding how much lime and fertilizer is needed in a specific situation, one size does not fit all. Soils differ widely in the levels of nutrients they hold, in soil pH and in how well (or poorly) they can hold lime activity and fertilizer. That's why the only way to accurately determine how much lime, how much fertilizer and the specific blend of fertilizer you might need is to have a qualified soil-testing laboratory analyze a sample of your soil. That's why we continue to hammer the aforementioned statement. We want you to get the best performance from your investment in food plots.

The Whitetail Institute's Soil Test Kit allows you to determine exactly how much lime and fertilizer is required. And because only a laboratory soil test kit can offer you precise recommendations tailored to your soil and crop, it's the only way to make sure you don't waste money buying lime or fertilizer you really don't need.

The Whitetail Institute soil test kit is easy to use, and the report, which is also easy to follow, is prepared by the Whitetail Institute's laboratory and mailed or emailed to you quickly. The Whitetail Institute also backs up its soil test kit with free consultation if needed at (800) 688-3030, extension 3. 

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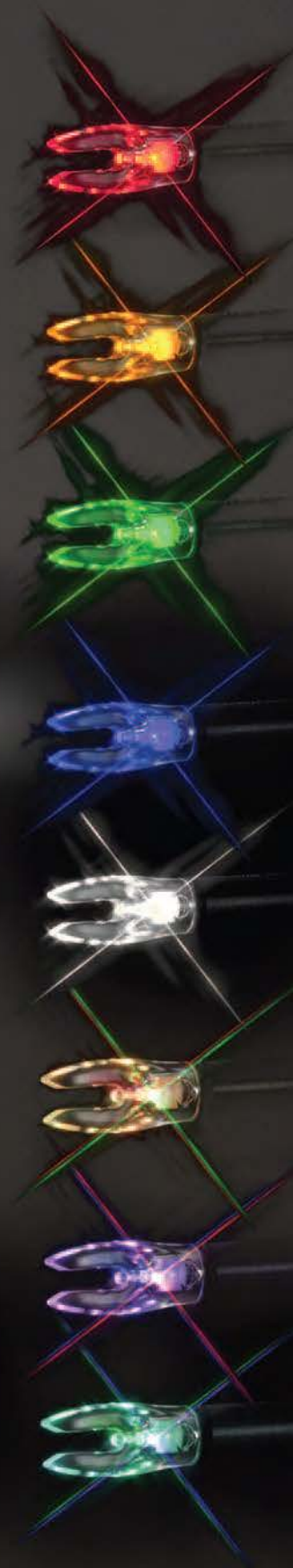
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RESET HOLE



A photograph of two hunters in a forest. One hunter, wearing a white shirt and blue pants, is using a chainsaw to cut a tree. The other hunter, wearing an orange shirt and orange pants, is standing nearby. The forest is filled with bare trees and fallen branches, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The ground is covered in dry leaves and twigs.

Tips to dramatically increase your deer sightings, success rate and overall enjoyment of the hunt.

If your property lacks adequate deer cover, you can create it by hinge-cutting trees where applicable.

Strategies to Maximize Daytime Deer Movement

By Michael Veine

Photos by the Author

You cannot consistently harvest target deer if they don't move during daylight. Hunters can boost their odds for success by using a strategy that focuses on attracting deer to their setups during hunting hours.

Many hunters and land managers excel at the attraction part of that formula, and they get tons of trail camera photos of dandy bucks. But unfortunately, most of that movement often occurs during darkness. That can be frustrating, but typically, most of those situations can be improved with some savvy hunting strategies. Read on for tips to dramatically increase your deer sightings, success rate and the overall enjoyment of the hunt.

Oct. 5, was a gorgeous day in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The sun was shining through a clear, blue sky, with a warm, gentle breeze slightly ruffling the brilliantly colored maple leaves. I was hunting one of my favorite stands at my big-woods hunting property and really en-

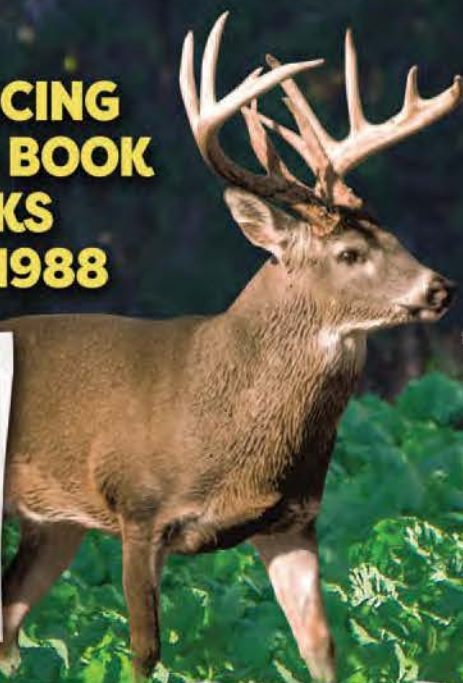
joying the sights, sounds and aroma of my favorite time of year. Although the conditions were ultra pleasant, many would consider a warm, bluebird day during early October to be less than ideal for deer hunting. That was not the case, though, as I began to see deer movement within minutes of climbing into my tree stand.

This spot is named Hemlock Ridge, and it's an awesome stand for many reasons. It flanks a swampy, brush-choked stream bottom and overlooks a large maple/hemlock ridge that juts out from a large cedar swamp. A small yet painstakingly well-kept food plot beckons deer there and is planted in Imperial Whitetail Clover and No-Plow. A combination of hinge-cut trees and the thick quagmire of the stream bottom effectively blocks most deer movement behind the stand (downwind).

The tree stand is also well hidden high in a cluster of cedar trees, so deer rarely pick me off from my hide. My entry and exit trail is also well laid out, taking me to the stand with little if any disturbance. One of the best features of this stand is its remoteness, as it's at the back of my land, with vast, lightly hunted woods and swamplands adjacent. The surrounding thickets are well shaded, which deer love during warm weather, and they also provide thermal cover during frigid conditions. The deer love the area even more because I have a large (5-

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acre) food plot a short walk away. It's a nearly perfect setup because deer can get to it quickly from their secure bedding areas, and they feel safe there during daylight. My big food plot sees activity mainly during low-light conditions, but those small plots in thick cover see action all day.

My profession as a Great Lakes charter captain affords me plenty of time off during fall, and I take full advantage by hunting a lot at my deer camp, which is more than 300 miles from my home. When I arrive at my property for a hunt (usually two weeks), I focus on two factors when deciding where I'm going to hunt: I always consider the wind, but controlling hunting pressure is equally as important. I look at five and even 15-day wind forecasts and note in my hunting log what winds are predicted and where I plan to hunt five to 10 days out. Of course, I update those locations as forecasts and conditions change, but I'm always thinking ahead to wisely spread my hunting pressure to the maximum.

I've exploited and greatly enhanced certain topographical features on my land with habitat improvements and access routes. My strategy was to segregate my property into sectors where various deer family groups can set up favored core areas for their home ranges. My property has super thick cover throughout, with food plots interspersed, so deer don't have to move far to satisfy their needs. Hunting different deer family groups at various parts of my property helps me control the impact of my pressure. A property must have plenty of thick cover with close food sources for this strategy to work. Many times, I've seen the same deer come and go from a food plot several times during a hunt, which really shows they are bedding close by. The thicker cover you have on your property, the better. If your property doesn't have enough bedding and hiding areas, you should consider creating

it. I had most of my property clear-cut and select-cut years ago, and the areas regenerated with thick, ideal deer habitat.

Research with GPS-collared deer has shown bucks will avoid a hunting stand for an average of three days after it has been used. After five days, deer usage in that area returns to normal. Studies have also shown that deer don't leave their home ranges because of hunting pressure. Rather, they just move to nearby heavy cover during the day and only move at night in areas that have not been pressured until they relax or perhaps forget about what spooked them days earlier.

When I strategically rotate my hunting pressure from one area (deer family group) to another on my property, I'm essentially hunting fresh deer all the time. I also hunt the front of my property the first days of a hunting trip. At those spots, which are closer to my cabin, I can enter and exit areas without disturbing the deer at the back of my property, thus keeping those deer family groups clueless of my activities until later. Of course, that means I must set up lots of stands so I can optimally hunt any sector of my property in almost any wind direction. It was a lot of work installing 30 stands, but my high degree of success made it worthwhile.

Back to my Hemlock Ridge hunt. A trio of does and fawns peacefully chowed down on my food plot, but they eventually simultaneously pivoted to the northeast, with their ears cupped forward. Soon, they turned and ambled off to the west, looking back over their shoulders. Five minutes later, the object of their attention emerged from under the canopy heading toward the food plot. His left antler was a typical four points, but the right antler was just a knobby protrusion with a non-typical cluster of points jutting up a few inches from his skull. The deer was big-bodied, though, and I judged him to be three years old. In my hunting area, where deer numbers are relatively low



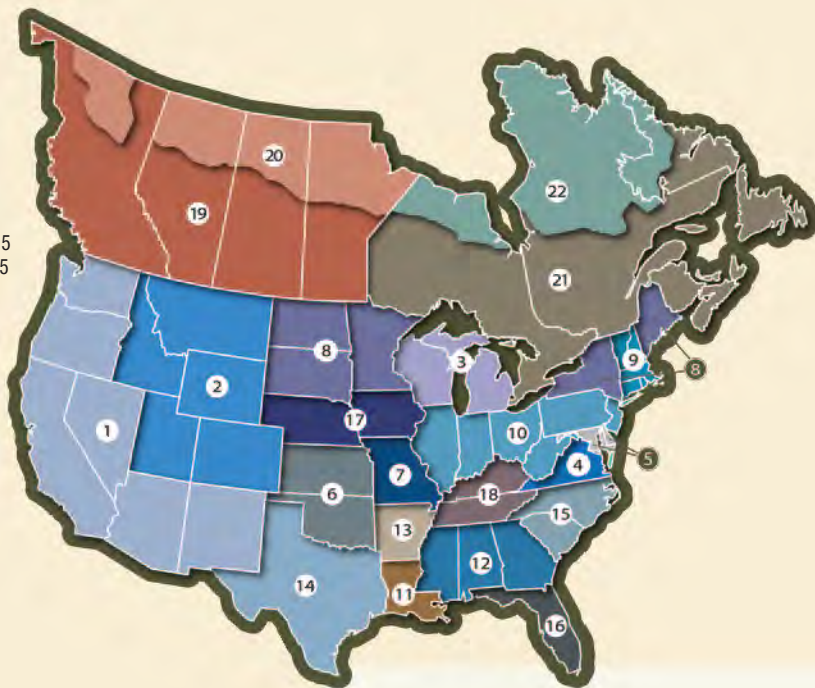
Creating thick cover is great, but opening travel corridors in strategic places can put deer where you want them.

Food Plot Planting Dates...

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

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

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



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

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

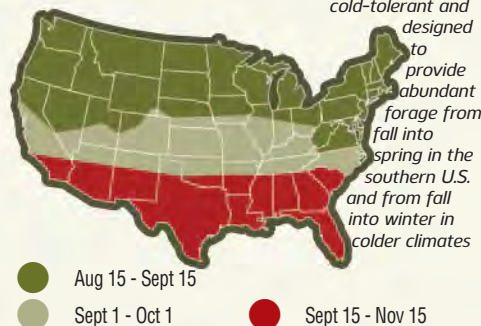
PLANTING DATES FOR WINTER-GREENS, TALL TINE TUBERS AND BEETS & GREENS

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

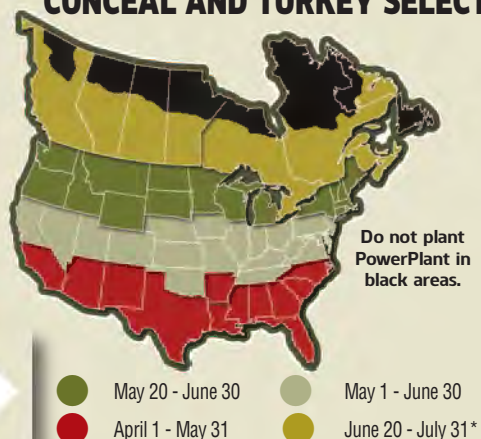
***Do not plant PowerPlant, Conceal or Sunn Hemp until soil temperatures reach a constant 65 degrees F.**

PLANTING DATES FOR WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

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



PLANTING DATES FOR IMPERIAL POWERPLANT, CONCEAL AND TURKEY SELECT





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Professional laboratory soil testing is one of the most important things you can do to ensure the success of your food plots. The Whitetail Institute offers professional laboratory soil test kits which provide results and recommendations for all Imperial Whitetail products or any other type seeds. (Complete instructions and all related information will come with each kit.) Test results include pH, phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). Specific and accurate fertilizer and lime recommendations for maximum performance from your plantings will be provided. The average turnaround time is 24-48 hours after our lab receives the sample. Another huge benefit to soil testing is, it can save you a lot of money by helping you avoid unnecessary fertilizer and lime expenses.

Please send _____ soil test kits at \$13.95 each. FREE shipping and handling. Cost of kit includes test results and phone consultation.

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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Charge to: ☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover

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

Signature _____

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and hunting pressure is sometimes high, a 3-year-old buck of any size is a trophy, representing the upper 10 percent of the buck age structure. Deciding to shoot him was a no-brainer. My arrow found its mark, and the deer died within 10 seconds of the hit. I recovered him hours before dark and extracted him with as much stealth and as little mess as possible, gutting him 3/4 of a mile away.

After processing that deer into venison the next day, I rested the back of my property for a week. I have dozens of hunting spots on public land, which let me further spread my hunting pressure. On my property, I don't save any specific spots for the peak rut because most of the hunting setups there are prime locations, given enough time between hunts. I have a few public spots that I save for peak-rut buck activity because they are so remote and hard to access that I only want to hunt them when conditions are prime. I really enjoy those public land hunts in the big woods of the Upper Peninsula because of the extreme challenge. To hunt there with any degree of consistent success requires constant scouting and a willingness to go the extra mile. It's a different brand of hunting, which I thrive on. In fact, I hunt about half the time on public land these days, and every time I hunt off my property makes my land that much better because of the lower hunting pressure there.

Like many other folks, I have neighbors with stands set up along my property boundaries. I still occasionally hunt those areas, mainly because I had stands set up there before they arrived. But because my neighbors overhunt their stands and don't pay strict attention to wind directions, those areas do not provide hunting opportunities as good as those on other parts of my property, so I largely avoid them and try to attract the deer to locations where I'm more in control of hunting pressure. I hunt my overpressured borders when I know the neighbors haven't been around for a while.

One more note on controlling hunting pressure: Some days, the wind will be gusty or switching directions, which makes effectively hunting any stand undetected a low-odds affair that typically results in educating a lot of deer and little chance for success. On those days, I might not hunt deer. Instead, I will go to public land and do some bird hunting, scouting or waterfowling. Sometimes, avoiding your deer hunting spots for a day is the most prudent strategy for future deer hunting success.

Eight days after killing that freak-racked buck, I returned to hunt the back of my property. Again, I witnessed midday deer movement minutes after entering my stand. This time, though, a spike buck was the first visitor. Fifteen minutes later, a second buck emerged from the swamp, splashing along until he also put his nose into the food plot. This buck looked like a big-bodied 2-year-old. A few minutes later, I heard the telltale splashing sound of another deer approaching and both of the other bucks took notice too. This deer was bigger, with a nice rack and plenty of body size. He was also limping badly, but I saw no visible injury. After counting his points (eight) to make sure he was legal under Michigan law, I turned a broadhead loose on his lungs. He belly-flopped into a puddle some 60 yards away, and when I walked up on him, I counted my blessings. Only one to two percent of hunters in the U.P. kill the legal limit of two bucks in one season, and the percentage of hunters killing two adult bucks during the first two weeks of October is minuscule. I was fortunate, but my good fortunes were largely because of how I manage my hunting pressure and a good dose of habitat work. Incidentally, that buck was limping because he had busted a hoof, which I had never seen before. 

Antler Building SUPPLEMENTS

from The Whitetail Institute

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

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

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

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The Advantages of Planting Perennial Food Plots in Spring

(and the Commitment Required)

HERE'S A QUICK EXPLANATION OF SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF PLANTING FOOD PLOTS:

1. You will see more deer, including some of your neighbors?
2. You will see better quality deer.
3. You will hold more deer on your property.
4. The results you get will almost always exceed your expectations.

The benefits are many, but it doesn't just magically happen. To achieve those benefits, an investment of time, effort and money is required. The great news is when you're sitting in your stand on a cold November afternoon overlooking your deep-green food plot, which contrasts so much from the grays and browns of winter, you reap the benefits. When you have eight to ten deer in front of you, including a no-brainer shooter that only needs to take another step or two to give you a shot, and your heart is beating a million miles per hour, your breathing is erratic and your knees are jumping up and down, that's when you forget the time, effort and money that got you to that moment.

Serious food plotters should consider planting at least some perennial food plots. Perennials can last up to five years from one planting. Whitetail Institute perennials offer extremely high protein, which is crucial for antler development, helps does produce more milk and helps overall herd health.

In most parts of the country, perennials can be planted in spring or fall. Let's discuss the benefits of planting perennials in spring and the commitment you must make to ensure your plantings perform as well as they are designed to.

The benefits of planting perennials in spring include the opportunity for the plots to have a full growing season before the next hunting season. Other benefits include having a tender, high-quality and highly nutritious food source for fawns when they are old enough to begin foraging and ensuring that high-quality food is available to the entire deer herd. Plus, having the extremely attractive Whitetail Institute perennials available earlier in the year will help attract and hold more deer on your property.

The Commitment Required

When you choose to plant perennials in the spring, it's especially important that you commit to performing timely maintenance

on the plots. Hopefully, you will soil test before your plantings and add the fertilizer and/or lime recommended to let your plants flourish. Or, at a minimum, you should follow the general recommendations for lime and fertilizer.

When you break ground to begin your food plot preparation, you will stimulate weed and grass seeds to germinate, and those weeds and grasses will also benefit from the lime and fertilizer you apply. That's where the competition for space begins. The forage you plant will begin to establish and take over space in the plot, but so will weeds and grasses. It's a competition for space between desired plants and unwanted plants. Obviously, we want the preferred plants to win.

To help ensure that your spring-planted perennials thrive, you must commit to fighting off weeds and grasses. You can achieve this by mowing the plot (when it's not too hot and dry) when you see weeds or grasses getting taller than the perennial forages or when any of the plants in the plot reach 10 to 12 inches tall. Mowing helps prevent weeds and grasses from producing seed that would create even more competition and also

helps stimulate new growth from the desired forages.

Another option is to spray broadleaf weeds with Slay herbicide and grasses with Arrest MAX. In most cases, grass is the most competitive in early-spring plots and should be sprayed with Arrest MAX when the grass is actively growing. (Note: Always refer to the herbicide label.)

Conclusion

Planting perennials in spring is an outstanding choice for the many reasons mentioned, but you must commit to controlling the weeds and grasses that will inevitably show up.

Controlling weeds and grass competition is something you should always do in perennial food plots, but it's most crucial the first growing season after a spring planting, when the forage is trying to get established and win the battle for space.

Work is required, but as mentioned, when your body and mind is taken over by buck fever next fall, the work will be forgotten, and the payback will begin. 🦌



Imperial Whitetail

EXTREME

*Effective in Good Quality Soils...
and Even Less Desirable Soils*

Have you wished for a perennial food plot product that's exceptionally attractive to deer, can thrive in areas of lower rainfall and less desirable soil, and can last for several years from one planting? That's a lot to ask from even the best food plot product. However, after years of proving to Whitetail Institute and its customers that it's up to that challenge, Imperial Whitetail Extreme can claim the title of a landmark food plot product.



Without question, the name Extreme describes the product's ability to thrive in tough planting conditions. Even so, anyone who understands the Whitetail Institute's approach to developing food plot products knows Extreme describes the product's ability to attract deer and to perform in more extreme situations. That's because attractiveness to deer is always the most important goal in Whitetail Institute forage development. So is Extreme really that attractive? Yes. In fact, Whitetail Institute testing has shown that Extreme's attractiveness to deer rivals that of the No. 1 food plot planting in the world, Imperial Whitetail Clover.

When you recognize that Extreme is designed foremost to be highly attractive to whitetails, it makes Extreme's versatility and durability even more amazing. Most other high-quality perennial food plot plantings require a minimum of 30 inches of rainfall per year to survive. Extreme can tolerate as little as half that — only 15 inches per year. And because of that ability, it can also stay green longer than other perennials during severe droughts. Although Extreme performs best in soils with a pH of 6.5 or higher, like other high-quality food plot plantings for deer, it can tolerate soil pH as low as 5.4, a level of acidity in which many other high-quality forage plantings cannot survive.

Customer Testimonials...

Works great for me and the deer ★★★★★

Posted by Todd T. (Pennsylvania)

I planted your Extreme this past fall, and while it developed a little slow with the dry fall, it has exploded with the last few rains. Deer are tearing the field up. Had 16 deer in my plot this afternoon but couldn't get one in bow range. Sooner or later, they will get close enough for me to shoot. When they do, I'll forward a pic. Thanks to my friend who recommended your products to me and to Whitetail Institute for offering great products. By the way, they also love the Winter Peas Plus.

My favorite ★★★★★

Posted by Walter (Wisconsin)

I've tried all your perennial products and have had good success. My favorite is Extreme. As long as you keep the weeds under control in early spring with your herbicides and fertilize annually, nothing beats it. Still love the others but my favorite is Extreme.

Awesome product ★★★★★

Posted by Reed (South Carolina)

This is our fifth year with Extreme. We're replanting a plot that had a competitor's product in it last year. It was basically ryegrass that grew well, but the deer didn't use it. My secret to success with the Extreme is keep the weeds and grasses out in spring and fertilize twice a year, spring and fall. Keep up the good work. You should make this where pictures can be uploaded. My plot should be in your magazine.

The primary component of Extreme is the Whitetail Institute's Persist Forb, an evergreen plant that produces a deep taproot that can reach down as far as two to three feet into the soil to find moisture. What's so startling, though, is that as durable as Persist is, it's also incredibly sweet. Likewise, Extreme's other perennial component, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory, is deeply rooted and drought tolerant. And unlike other chicories, which can get stemmy and waxy as they mature, WINA-100 chicory stays tender, highly palatable and attractive to whitetails. Extreme also includes specially selected annual clovers to help make sure your food plot can green up and start attracting deer as soon as possible after planting. And make sure you understand: Extreme will also flourish in seedbeds with higher soil pH and areas that receive abundant rainfall, making it one of the most versatile food plot products.

Extreme produces a high-quality, protein-rich food source that's exceptionally attractive to whitetails and provides crucial nutrition to deer year-round. With protein levels up to 44 percent, Extreme helps provide deer with protein that is critical for antler development, doe lactation, fawn growth and overall herd health. And it can even do so in areas where growing conditions are ideal or where rainfall levels and soil pH are so low that other perennials aren't an option. If you live where the climate or soil pH is less than optimum (and even if you don't), give Extreme a try. You'll find that it's one of the most attractive, durable and versatile food plot plantings ever offered.

Helpful Hint: Extreme establishes quicker and thrives longer if you follow up with fertilizer that includes a high nitrogen component. 🍷

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The WEED DOCTOR

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

OK, Mister Hotshot — Where Did these Weeds Come From?

Being an amateur history-geek, last year I refreshed my knowledge of World War I — the 100th anniversary of the armistice. Coincidentally, while preparing for this article I recalled an interesting (at least to me) publication¹ on the flora of a World War I battle site, the Somme Battlefield in northeastern France. Like many battles in World War I, combat was confined to a restricted area for an extended period of time. What had once been rolling pastures and small woodlots were transformed into a wasteland of trenches and artillery impact craters. War destroyed the topography of the countryside. The next summer, after hostilities moved elsewhere, the once barren battlefield was transformed into a sea of red poppies in full bloom. This was the inspiration of the present-day tradition of using red poppies to commemorate what we now call Veteran's Day or Armistice Day.

British botanists conducted a detailed plant ecology study of the Somme Battlefield, catalogued the suddenly changed flora, and identified factors that influenced plant species diversity. Repeated artillery barrages pulverized the soil and when combined with the weathering effects of rain, snow, and freezing/thawing the net effect was basically spasmodic tillage of an entire region. Dormant weed seeds (in this case red poppy seed) were exposed to oxygen, sunlight and water. What was once pasture and woodland was transformed to a sea of red poppies. Consider this to be an unusual example of plants appearing out of the blue.

To understand how weeds unexpectedly appear, a brief discussion is needed on how plants reproduce. Plants are propagated by seed (annuals) or vegetative structures (perennials). For our purposes, I will limit the discussion to annuals producing seed. Annual weeds flower and produce seed — lots of seed. A single pigweed can produce approximately 500,000 seeds. Some weeds produce large numbers of tiny seeds (pigweeds, annual ragweed, lambsquarters and crabgrass), but other species produce fewer seed that are larger in size. Some of the weed seeds become diseased or fall victim to predation, but others are transported elsewhere by animals, wind, rainfall, or human activities. Of course, weed seeds enter the area the same way — a constant flow in and out. Seed in the soil profile might remain dormant for an extended period of time, until specific environmental conditions unlock the code for germination. The dormancy code is unique to the genetics of the weed species and remains one of the great riddles in agricultural science.



Weed seed comes in all shapes and sizes. When seed production and weed density are considered, the total number of weed seed produced often exceed millions per acre.



Weed seeds are shed by plants at maturity and accumulate on the soil surface where some of them are eventually buried and become dormant.

It is safe to say that most of the hunting sites where food plots are located have been plowed and planted to crops at some point in the past. The transition from a cultivated field to forest is called old field succession. During this long ecological process, the types and numbers of plants change with each species producing seeds that are eventually added to the soil. Seeds can move downward through naturally occurring cracks or fissures in the soil, animal burrows, or earthworm tunnels. Buried seeds, in the absence of oxygen and light, can remain dormant for years. Refer to Table 1 which lists the viability of many common weed seeds in controlled burial experiments. It is easy to see why weeds appear out of nowhere the minute a harrow slices into the soil breaking seed dormancy.

The dormant weed seeds are in the soil waiting for the correct temperature, oxygen level and exposure to light. However, there are no practical methods to test the soil for weeds other than to till the site and see what species emerge. Following that line of thought, a useful strategy to survey potential weediness and partially deplete numbers of viable weed seeds is preplant seedbed tillage. This is a proactive approach also called stale seedbed weed control and is initiated several weeks or months before seeding the forage. Shallow and thorough tillage with a disk harrow or power tiller simultaneously kills weed seedlings and stimulates germination of another flush. Repeating the process again in two weeks controls the emerged weeds and stimulates another batch to germinate. An aggressive program of this type repeated several times at two-week intervals greatly reduces the weed seedbank in the plow layer. The keys are starting early, aggressive tillage that pulverizes the soil and maintaining the two-week intervals of repetition. Other production practices, such as incorporating lime and fertilizer, can be combined with the stale seedbed tillage to increase efficiency.

The stale seedbed tillage approach is generally more effective in weed seed depletion than using fallow applications of glyphosate. Both fallow tillage and glyphosate kill weeds, but tillage stimulates another flush of weed emergence and while glyphosate does not. After all, the intent of this broad strategy is to deplete weed seeds in the plow layer before seeding the forage. This does not mean that fallow applications

of glyphosate should be shelved. Fallow applications of glyphosate are a key component in the management of perennial weeds such as briars, bramble, poison ivy, common bermudagrass and quackgrass. For perennial weeds, a reasonable approach is to sandwich a glyphosate application between fallow tillage operations.

To make headway in reducing numbers of weed seeds in the soil, preventing weed seed production needs to be a high priority. While teaching undergraduate weed science classes, I cited research from Nebraska that showed intensive weed control for six seasons in corn, which included no weed seed production, reduced the number of weed seed in the soil by 98 percent. Weeds are not very forgiving, because in the same study, it took only three years of poor weed control before weed seed numbers rebounded to within half of the original density.

The title of this article was inspired by the dozens of customers' weed identification and control inquiries I am routinely assigned each summer. Emotions and frustrations typically run high, as would mine if roles were reversed. The answer to the question posed in the title: Weeds almost always come from seed already in the soil. In every case that I have handled, the weed species in question was endemic to the customer's region, and some factor triggered the dormant seed to germinate. While nobody in my profession can blindly predict what weeds will be present, food plot managers can begin seedbed preparation months in advance, and these efforts might provide clues on what weeds may be present once the food plot is planted. That knowledge will provide a reasonable chance to successfully manage weeds. 🌱

Table 1. Weed seed viability after burial in Nebraska².

	YEARS OF BURIAL WHEN SEED WERE EXHUMED				
	0	2	6	12	17
	Germination (%)				
Barnyardgrass	17	58	9	2	0
Large crabgrass	12	45	1	0	0
Yellow foxtail	94	85	56	9	0
Cocklebur	10	59	37	0	1
Lambsquarters	28	35	14	16	7
Jimsonweed	93	93	88	95	90
Redroot pigweed	66	38	9	7	1
Tall waterhemp	40	39	0	14	1
Velvetleaf	15	27	60	29	35
Common mullein	98	88	90	90	95
Musk thistle	44	36	23	0	0
Canada thistle	60	29	25	17	7
Curly dock	76	93	94	73	61
Hemp dogbane	74	13	1	0	0
Horsenettle	0	7	6	4	5
Ivyleaf morning glory	69	10	6	6	3

¹ Hill, A.W. 1917. The flora of the Somme battlefield. Bull. of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. pp. 297-300.

² Burnside, O. C., R. G. Wilson, S. Weisberg, and K. G. Hubbard. 1996. Seed longevity of 41 weed species buried 17 years in eastern and western Nebraska. Weed Sci. 44:74-86.

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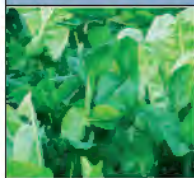
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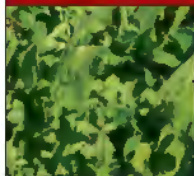
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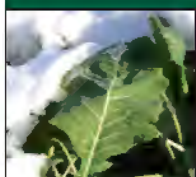
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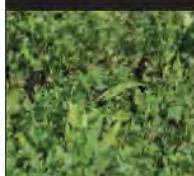
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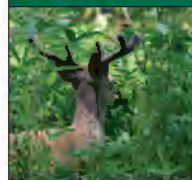
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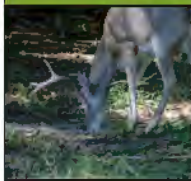
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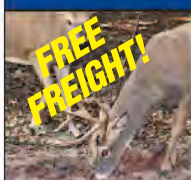
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*Creating quality whitetail habitat
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WHEN THE WORK IS THE REWARD

By Scott Bestul

Photos by the Author

Seeing the giant 8-pointer was heady enough. But when my neighbor and hunting buddy Dave Olson watched the monster buck stroll within 40 yards and settle in for a nap, a huge smile spread across my friend's face. Of all the places the old warrior could have selected for a bed, he chose to sidle up to the top of a downed elm tree. The buck pressed his butt up against the tree limbs, folded his legs beneath him and took a snooze.



Dave was grinning because that elm was one of many trees we'd hinge-cut just a few months before. On that summer day, I'd joined Dave and two other deer nuts, all of us armed with chainsaws, to transform a wooded ridge into a bedding area. Though the ridge was heavily timbered, almost all of those trees were low-value species: elm, box elder, and young and stunted hickory and maple. Even worse, the competing trees had formed a sun-blocking canopy that wouldn't let young trees and brush — the stuff deer love — grow, much less flourish.

So, we made a mess of the place in a few hours, hinge-cutting trees at varying heights and forming a crosshatched tangle of treetops. When the afternoon ended, we'd taken a ridge with a 150-yard view and transformed it into rabbit cover where you could barely see 60 feet. Area deer responded almost immediately, visiting the ridge to browse on tender browse and, of course, bed in the security cover we'd created.

Though Dave didn't get a crack at that monstrous 8-pointer, he enjoyed a just-as-good experience, watching the old warrior nap for almost four hours in habitat we'd created. My neighbor has killed some great bucks (three whitetails 4-1/2 years or older in each of the past three seasons), but he has long since left the part of his hunting career where the only satisfaction is tagging a deer. Making things better for deer — and seeing results from that work — has become a reward in itself. Here's a look at some off-season projects that have brought my hunting buddies and me such great satisfaction.

Start Up a Saw

Dave's encounter with that tremendous buck was exciting, but time has proven it no fluke. Since we've started manipulating habitat with

chainsaws, we've made our hunting grounds exponentially better. Here are three examples:

Clear-cuts: Let's face it. When you're trying to grow young trees and brush, the more sunlight they receive, the better. And nothing puts more sunlight on a forest floor than a clear-cut. But as I tell anyone who'll listen, seek professional help if you're a rookie logger. Some tree species benefit from clear-cutting, but it's disastrous for others. If you're not sure what these species are in your area, ask an expert before you start.

A clear-cut creates whitetail habitat deer will use for many years. The drawback is that it will take a while to start (most clear-cuts will produce good cover and browse within a year), and the area will not look very pretty for a few seasons — unless you're a deer hunter.

Hinge-cutting: As the opening story illustrates, hinge-cutting creates immediate cover that whitetails quickly adopt. I liken it to throwing a brush pile in a bass lake. Every fish in the area will zip over, check it out and not spend a second wondering why a Christmas tree is suddenly a part of their world. They immediately dial it in to their list of safe spaces and move on with their lives. Deer are the same.

The trick with hinge-cutting, of course, is to pick on only low-value tree species. If you have a ridge top full of white oaks, leave those valuable, acorn-producing trees alone. But if you have a wasteland of worthlessness, consider the saw. One trick we've learned is to layer our cuts, sawing trees at varying heights to create cover with more depth and structure. Typically, we start hinge-cutting larger trees first, and those cuts are lower (2 to 4 feet high). Then we drop lighter, smaller trees on top of them, using higher cuts. If you cut the little trees first, the big ones just push them down, and you've lost much of the height that makes a hinge-cut effective. Generally, I don't like deer to be able to see over the cut. I think this makes deer feel more secure,



and it also forces them to look for other deer that they hear or smell in the cut. And a searching buck is an active buck — always a good thing!

Screen and block: A final application of the chainsaw is to create screens that force deer to move in specific directions or to block trails you don't want them to use. I consider this a hunting technique, not a habitat improvement, but it's worth mentioning.

Set the Table

As any reader of this magazine recognizes, deer nutrition is a huge component in the plans of any whitetail hunter/manager. My gang spends a monstrous amount of time planting and tending food plots each year, and those rituals have become such a part of the annual hunt that I can no longer imagine doing without them. But I believe we approach food plots differently than most.

I conduct seminars across the country each year, and food plotting is among the most-discussed topics during the question-and-answer sessions that follow my talks. I usually tell folks I have a love/hate relationship with food plots, mostly because people ask what to plant so they can kill more deer. I consider the main mission of our food plots is to feed deer. There's a difference, and I think it's important.

We plant acres of food for deer each year, and those food plots are a part of our hunting plan only a few times each fall. We hunt them sparingly, mostly because we want deer to feel safe eating there and keep returning regardless of the time of year. We have a 100-day bow season in Minnesota, and the most we've sat any food plot stand during a season is six hunts. There's been a lot said and written about creating sanctuaries — places where deer feel safe — and it's an excellent tactic. We like our food plots to fit into the sanctuary mentality. When deer decide to eat there, they're not looking over their shoulders every bite, wondering when they're going to get shot.

The results have been pretty amazing. Although we hunt our plots less than ever, our odds have soared. Neighbor Dave killed his two best bucks on the same food plot in consecutive years, and I'm convinced he did so because he rarely sits that spot. And there have been other benefits. Deer pile into our plots in winter (which boosts herd health in the neighborhood and also puts our properties on the mental map of bucks that might relocate to find does during the rut), and we also find more shed antlers now than we did before.

I realize I might be splitting hairs, but in my head, there's a difference between planting food plots simply to kill bucks and planting them as part of an overall habitat/whitetail management plan. I prefer the latter.

Roll in the Grass

One of the most satisfying things you can do as a manager is take ground that offers nothing to deer and create killer habitat. And any time I need an example of my coolest effort, all I need to do is look out my bedroom window. From there, I can see the northern end of a switchgrass field that taught me how much deer will use tall native prairie grass for bedding and security cover.

Just seven years ago, that patch of switchgrass was an abandoned cattle pasture that was a virtual wasteland for whitetails. Although there'd been no cows there for many years, the stuff that grew in after the livestock left would barely hold a pheasant, much less a buck. There were tufts of wispy brome grass, clumps of foxtail, small patches



of berry brush and the odd box elder clone. For years, I'd watched deer walk through that patch and barely pause. It was a patch of nothing, connecting places that deer wanted to reach.

Then we decided to convert that old pasture into a switchgrass sanctuary, and it changed everything. On a May day after he'd finished planting all the corn and soybeans for the season, my neighbor Alan hauled his equipment to this pathetic pasture and went to work. First, he tilled up every inch, and then smoothed out the humps and divots with a drag. And then we loaded a drill with switchgrass and other native prairie grass seed, and Alan planted the six acres in less than a half-hour.

I'll confess this up front; I grew up in Wisconsin, and for many years operated under the delusion that you needed trees to hold deer. Then, after several years of hunting Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas — places where if a deer needed trees to feel safe, he'd be psychotic since he wore spots — I learned that grassy cover can make whitetails feel just as secure as any plant that grows bark. Establishing that cover in my little slice of southern Minnesota turned out to be one of the smartest habitat moves we'd ever make.

If you pay attention to whitetail science (I do), you know that as a buck ages, his territory typically shrinks. Our switchgrass planting has confirmed that for us. Though it's only been a half-dozen years since we established that cover, I know of at least three mature bucks that have made that habitat an important part of their core area — pretty heady stuff when you remember that this slice of native prairie is only six acres, and the adjacent timber is a 5-acre chunk of hinge-cut nastiness. Any time I can make 11 acres an important part of a mature buck's life, I feel like I've done something good.

Conclusion

I know there was a time — many years, actually — when I'd have done none of this hard labor without some expectation of a reward — in other words, my deer tag affixed to the leg of a dandy buck. But these days, posing behind a buck for a grip-and-grin is far less important than just knowing that a mature buck is living in a place I helped create. If I see him someday, fine. If I get a shot, even better. But if all I do is help make the place where an old whitetail feels comfortable, well, I'm just fine with that, too. Sometimes, just doing the work is reward enough. 🦌

REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

(Continued from page 33)

about Whitetail Institute products...



We believe in giving our deer the trio approach that Whitetail Institute has to offer. When I say trio approach, we plant Whitetail Institute's annual and perennial seed mixes along with a healthy dose of their 30-06 Minerals. Trashy Two was just a clean 10-point-frame buck at 4 but at 5, he really threw off lots of points. The trio approach helped this buck to reach his full potential.

We get great results from our Imperial Whitetail Clover with deer utilization about nine to ten months of the year. For fall and winter, I like Pure Attraction and Beets & Greens. The oats in the Pure Attraction seem to get the deer on the plot early, while the Beets & Greens are still putting on forage and bulbs. Once winter arrives, the bulbs in the Beets & Greens seem to be the preference for our deer. We try our best to not run out of food in the late winter as this is critical to the antler size of your herd the next year.

The past three years, we have started feeding Whitetail Institute's 30-06 Mineral Supplement. Since doing so, we have noticed our bucks throwing off extra kickers, or "trash," off their antlers. Trashy Two was a buck that loved the 30-06 Mineral Supplement. We usually start putting out the minerals in late February to early March to give our bucks about two months of consumption before they start putting on their antlers. Bucks love hitting those mineral sites through summer, and they make our trail camera runs a lot more fun!

Since utilizing this trio approach, we have noticed bigger antler sizes and bigger bodies. Remember, one key to large antlers the next year is a well-nourished herd in late winter.

Blair Goins — Iowa



I own and operate Cutawhiskie Creek Outfitters in North Carolina. I started in 2005 and have been going strong ever since. In 2006, I got into food plots and deer nutrition and management for whitetail deer. I used every product on the market and tested and evaluated many seed products and minerals. Whitetail Institute products were by far more popular to the deer! Overwhelming to say the least! Imperial Whitetail Clover, Fusion and Alfa-Rack Plus had the deer doing circles.

I've been using Whitetail Institute products for over a decade and it is absolutely amazing the difference we see each year in our herd. The bucks have gotten bigger in body weight, and the racks have reached record numbers in Hereford County, North Carolina.

Clay McPherson — North Carolina

Send Us Your Photos!

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

info@whitetailinstitute.com

or send them to:

Whitetail News, Attn: Field Tester Response
239 Whitetail Trail, Pintola, AL 36043

Quinton Stone – New York

This was Evan Blodgett's first year out with a bow as well as a gun. On Nov. 13 of the New York bow season, Evan shot this huge 11-point buck at 35 yards. What a great way to start out hunting.



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Josh Rodrick – Illinois

Getting permission to hunt in southeastern Illinois is becoming harder for multiple reasons. Landowners are becoming less inclined to award permission to strangers, and fence rows and small patches of timber are slowly becoming extinct. When my wife and I got married, I sold my smaller house, and we were fortunate enough to find property with a beautiful house and a promising patch of woods. I immediately set out to cleaning up old grown-up pasture to plant Whitetail Institute's food plots. On my second full hunting season on the property, I got to witness two firsts that brought me much satisfaction. I watched my five-year-old nephew harvest his first deer, and also my wife connected with her first. My hunting season was full of action

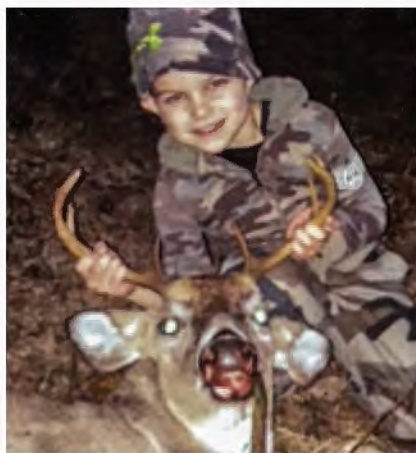


and excitement, but nothing made me happier than those two moments! My nephew and brother-in-law hunted from a blind over a small section of Secret Spot. He made a lethal shot 20 minutes after sunup. And my wife brought down a button buck overlooking tried-and-true Imperial Whitetail Clover. I thank Whitetail Institute for their amazing products and overall deer hunting etiquette and excellence!



Chris Baugh – Ohio

I've been using Whitetail Institute products for over six years, and the results have been incredible. When we first started, we were lucky to see a 140-class deer. Now we have killed a couple of 180-class and several 150- to 170-class. But nothing compares to the buck that was killed this year by my 5-1/2-year-old son. It was his first buck/deer and that memory and time we spent together is truly what hunting is all about. Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for making such attractive clover that the buck grazed in to 15 yards so, as my son put it, "smoked him." I have and will continue to buy Whitetail Institute seed. Thank you.



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