

WHITETAIL News



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New From The Whitetail Institute: **BEETS & GREENS**

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COVER:

A BUCK OF MANY LIFETIMES

Imperial Whitetail Clover Helps Lead to Success

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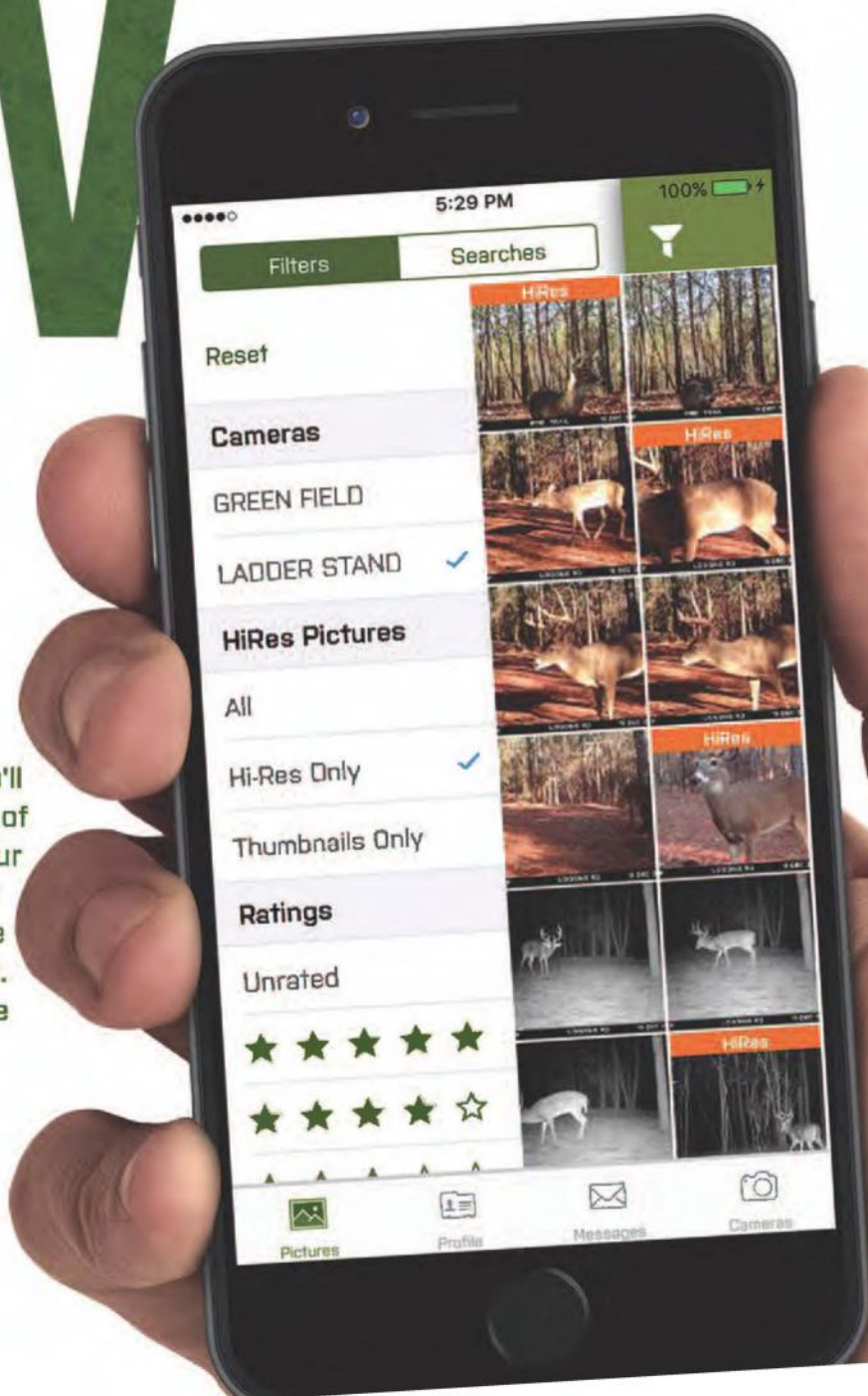
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Cover Photo by Jeff Hopkins



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Steve Scott Vice President, Executive Editor

William Cousins Operations Manager

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A Message from **RAY SCOTT**

Founder and President of the Whitetail Institute of North America

Success Measured by More than Sales

It was top-quality products and our philosophy of service and the dedication of our consultants that took us to the top of the deer nutrition industry we pioneered. And it is top-quality products and our consultants that keep us there.

Sales are in my blood like fishing and hunting are. I understood the concept of “trade” at a tender age. I was about five when I took a jar of my mother’s home-canned green beans to our neighbor’s house to swap for a jar of the sweet golden honey she harvested from her backyard beehives.

My mother marched me right back but I prevailed... and kept the honey at our neighbor’s insistence.

I would go on to sell my extra sandwiches in grade school until my mother found out. In my early teens I sold bags of parched peanuts at city sporting events. Toting a huge basket, I would toss the bags and catch the coins that came back (sometimes with a tip!). I loved earning that penny on each bag and just as much, I enjoyed the feeling that I provided a genuine service to the folks who really wanted the fresh hot peanuts I promised.

I firmly believe the famous adage “nothing happens until somebody sells something,” be it a product, a service or an idea. That philosophy is the engine of the free enterprise system that has made our country great and a land of opportunity.

In 1967 I “sold” the idea of successful bass fishing, tournaments and conservation to America’s anglers along with membership in Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S., *Bassmaster*) and membership reached over a half million. About 20 years later I sold the idea of better deer hunting and management through whitetail nutrition products when I founded the Whitetail Institute of North America.

But in my many years of selling I learned successful sales went

far beyond the simple transaction of money for a product or service. It’s what happens AFTER the sale. In my early insurance days I called it “service after the sale” and I credit my entrepreneurial success to that philosophy. I even wrote a book a number of years ago, titled “Prospecting and Selling” subtitled “From a Fishing Hole to a Pot of Gold.” Corny, but it caught some eyes (and following my philosophy, you can order a copy by calling 1-800-518-7222).

I learned early on to have true and lasting success, a one-time sale doesn’t get it. You’ve got to keep your customers and clients wanting to come back. I did that with both B.A.S.S. and the Whitetail Institute. My ventures succeeded not only with top-quality products but top-quality service.

It was top-quality products and our philosophy of service and the dedication of our consultants that took us to the top of the deer nutrition industry we pioneered. And it is top-quality products and our consultants that keep us there.

I am obviously proud of our products but equally so with the experts who talk to our customers every day and explain our products and how to use them — whether the caller buys or not. And I’m equally proud of the many loyal hunters and whitetail managers who come back season after season for both products and information.

A longtime customer who returns to call for a product or advice is our proudest achievement!

Ray Scott



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New Imperial

BEETS & GREENS

ATTRACTION, ATTRACTION, ATTRACTION

The Whitetail Institute of North America is proud to announce its newest annual food plot product for fall and winter: **Imperial Whitetail Beets & Greens**. A diverse brassica blend, Beets & Greens establishes and grows quickly, providing massive amounts of forage, turnips, beets and radishes to attract deer and provide them with a variety of food options from fall through winter. The nature of its forage components maximizes attraction by offering a variety of food options within the same plot throughout the life of the stand.

Forage Components and Performance

Beets & Greens is a precise blend of diverse brassica components. Each component has been carefully selected using a broad range of criteria, including attractiveness to deer, rapid establishment, prolific growth and abundant production. Then, it's blended in precise ratios that Whitetail Institute testing has shown to maximize the performance of the stand by providing deer with choices of multiple food sources in the same plot continuously from fall through winter. And

as is the case with other Whitetail Institute seed blends, Beets & Greens includes forage components that are only available in Whitetail Institute products.

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

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

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

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

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

Not all kales are the same. Some are coarse and indigestible. The leaves of kale varieties grown mostly for ornamental purposes are



technically edible, but they aren't nearly as palatable as other varieties. Also, some kales form tight heads instead of loose leaves — for example, the cabbages you see in grocery stores. Some kale varieties don't grow as quickly or as tall as others, making them less suitable for food plots.

WINA 210K Kale suffers none of those drawbacks.

It's a vegetable cultivar that grows large, individual leaves instead of a head, and the leaves are extremely attractive to deer.

WINA 412 Radish: WINA 412 Radish maximizes the attraction of the stand during the long term by adding variety to the forage and tuber offerings of the plot.



Additional Benefit: Soil Tilth

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

Soil Tilth: Tilth refers to the physical condition of soil as it relates to the soil's ability to grow crops. It's determined by specific physical

characteristics of the soil, including how well or poorly the soil can hold moisture and how well or poorly it's aerated. Soils with good tilth have spaces that allow water to infiltrate and move, adequate levels of oxygen for roots to grow, and also acceptable levels of moisture and nutrients. Generally, heavier soils with a high clay content are especially prone to poor soil tilth because of compaction.

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

Using radishes as an example, WINA 412 Radish produces tubers that can push several feet even into compacted clay soils and grow as thick as soft-drink bottles — much larger than the small, round radishes we commonly see in grocery stores. In addition to aer-

ating the soil as they grow, any turnip and radish tubers remaining the spring after planting also add organic matter to the soil as they break down.

Conclusion

Available in 3-pound bags that will plant 1/2-acre and 12-pound bags that will plant two acres, Beets & Greens comes ready to plant, including the Whitetail Institute's Rainbond seed coating, which maximizes seedling survivability by absorbing moisture from the soil and keeping it next to the seeds as they sprout and grow. If you're looking for a unique brassica planting for fall that includes highly attractive brassica forage and boosts attraction even further by offering multiple food sources to deer from fall through winter, give Beets & Greens a try. Your deer will thank you for it. 🦌



16 REASONS

Why I Love Imperial Whitetail Clover

*The author is extremely fond of his favorite food plot seed
and he explains why*

By **Gerald Almy**

are you the objective, science-driven, just-the-facts type? Or are you more of an intuitive, go-with-your-gut person who forms outlooks and beliefs based on personal experience, hunch and intuition?

I would wager that many people — probably most of us — blend both approaches in developing outlooks and drawing conclusions. I place myself in the middle of that spectrum.

That became clear as I started organizing notes to tackle this topic for *Whitetail News*. As I began analyzing why Imperial Whitetail Clover is my favorite food plot seed, I realized there was an almost equal mixture of intuitive, subjective reasons born of personal experience but also plenty of scientific, evidence-driven ones. My initial

list was even longer, but here are 16 reasons why I love Imperial Whitetail Clover. Some are based on personal experience, some on hard, proven facts.

If you're a veteran food plotter who has grown this fabulous clover, you'll likely nod your head in agreement. If you're new to this wonderful hobby, these reasons will give you plenty of justification for making this clover the backbone of your wildlife food plot program.

1 It's the first food plot seed I ever planted. After moving into a small cedar cabin our family owned on the Shenandoah River after college, I plunged full-time into the world of free-lance outdoor writing. I did plenty of traveling, gathering fishing and hunting stories.

But the cabin I took over (and eventually bought) sat on four acres, and about one of those was tillable. So one of the first things I spent my checks on after selling a few articles was wildlife seed. If I was going to live in the woods and write about hunting, by golly, I wanted to see some animals. And deer were at the top of the list.

That was about the time Ray Scott revolutionized the world of food plots with the unveiling of Imperial Whitetail Clover. Using a small garden tiller and Roundup, I carved out a primitive little plot of that new clover mixture.

The thriving plot of Imperial Whitetail Clover became a deer magnet. And it never stopped attracting them. It's difficult to forget your first successful food plot.

2 It tolerates drought and brutally hot weather. With checks coming in sporadically during those early writing years, I decided to skimp and save a few bucks on seed when I expanded my plantings. That's when one of the major advantages of Imperial Whitetail Clover became obvious. It was the first of what would be many brutally hot years with almost record-low rainfalls. While my cheap co-op clover withered in the sun that July, the Imperial Clover continued to thrive.

Eventually, when I moved, bought more land and planted more forages, I turned to the Whitetail Institute's clover-chicory mix (now called Fusion) for the driest areas. But the Imperial Whitetail Clover still performs incredibly well in drought even when planted by itself. And the Rainbond coating on each seed helps get new plantings established even in times of pathetic rainfall.

3 It thrives in less-than-perfect soils. You can do a lot to improve your soils by soil-testing, adding lime and fertilizer, eradicating weeds and tilling to create a smooth, fine-textured seed bed. But let's face it. Some of us are stuck with growing plots on just mediocre dirt. After I moved to a bigger parcel, in the western part of

Shenandoah County, Virginia, I found that to be the case for some of my plots.

I had more ground, and it's a beautiful tract of land. But the soil, with a few exceptions, is mostly mediocre. Yet with enough fertilizer and lime applications, the ground churns out impressive stands of Imperial Whitetail Clover that last three to five years before I plow them under and plant an annual such as PowerPlant or Winter-Greens for a year or two.

Sure, heavy, rich bottomland soil will produce the ultimate clover plots. But most of us can do pretty well with just average soil if we put in the effort, adding the lime and nutrients the soil needs.

4 Deer love it. Since my first bumbling attempts at scratching out food plots in the 1980s, I've experimented with about every type of forage that's come out for deer and wildlife. A few have turned out to be pretty good (mostly Whitetail Institute products). And deer are attracted to almost all of them. But the plant that gets hammered? Imperial Whitetail Clover.

5 It spreads naturally. It's a battler. Maybe sometimes you don't get a perfect, even spread of seeds when you plant a plot. Or a sudden downpour washes out one area before the plants take root. With some forages, those areas would remain barren or soon fill in with unwanted weeds from seeds blowing in or buried in the sub-soil. With my clover plots, those strong-

growing legumes typically expand and fill those areas on their own before many weeds take hold. They do it by stolon growth. Those are above-ground plant stems or runners that spread horizontally and then take root, creating new plants in open areas.

6 I killed my first buck heading toward an Imperial Whitetail Clover plot. Do you remember your first buck? I doubt any hunter will forget that important day in their development as a sportsman. I shot my first buck with a .35-caliber lever-action as it angled down the knife-sharp slopes of the Massanutten Mountain toward a plot of Imperial Whitetail Clover I had planted many years ago.

Acorns were scarce that year, and most farm crops were already plowed under that cold November day. The buck knew where he wanted to go — the only nutritious green plot around. And by luck, I had taken a stand on a fallen oak along the switch-backing route he took down the mountain to reach it. That deer was not only a milestone in my development as a hunter, but the story of taking it also inspired my first contribution to the prestigious *Gray's Sporting Journal* magazine.



The author hand-spreads seed on a clean seedbed. Creating a firm and weed-free seedbed prior to spreading the seed is important for a good clover plot. Photo by Gerald Almy

7 It's high in protein. At up to 35 percent, Imperial Clover has one of the highest protein levels of any major deer forage. That's vital for growing muscle mass, bone structure and, when a deer's body needs are met, bigger antlers. It's also crucial for lactating does. Although deer only require 16 to 20 percent protein, the clover's higher protein levels help balance out the lower percentage of many natural forbs and twigs the animals also feed on.

8 I killed my heaviest-antlered buck ever on my land as it moved between two clover plots. This was not the highest-scoring buck I've seen on my 117 acres, but his mass was awesome. And I knew from watching him multiple seasons that he was older than five. I caught him right before dusk making one last check of an Imperial Whitetail Clover plot tucked in a small valley between two cedar-choked knolls. I watched him drink from the adjoining pond, and then squeezed the .30/06 trigger when he stepped onto higher ground.

His bases measured more than six inches. I can't document it scientifically, but I've noticed that the more Imperial Whitetail Clover plots I plant, the more antler mass seems to increase. And no measurement of a rack intrigues me like mass, which almost always corresponds directly with age until a buck reaches its peak at seven or eight years.

9 I killed my biggest bucks in Iowa, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Maryland and West Virginia as they fed on or moved toward Imperial Whitetail Clover plots outfitters had planted. I've been fortunate to travel widely as an outdoor writer, and I've seen this product planted on thousands of acres.

There's a reason — rather, three reasons — for that. It attracts deer. It grows healthier, bigger animals. And it produces happy clients — like I was on those hunts.

10 It doesn't need protection. If you've planted a field of soybeans, cowpeas or lablab and had it almost obliterated overnight by hungry, overabundant whitetails, you'll appreciate that characteristic.

Unless you plant just one tiny plot in an area heavily overpopulated with animals, you should never have to worry about deer overbrowsing your crop of clover. The more they eat, the more Imperial Whitetail Clover comes back with new, more palatable growth.

11 It benefits from mowing. Regarding reason No. 10, deer usually can't even keep clover eaten down sufficiently in most plots. In that case, the forage can benefit from mowing. Of all food plot activities, this is one of my favorites.

Trim down the plot when blossoms start to become abundant or weeds and grasses grow several inches taller than the clover. By just clipping the tops of the weeds and most flowers, you can invigorate a plot and produce more tender, lush growth by mowing — one of the greatest ways I know to spend a sunny summer day.

12 Weeds and grasses can be easily controlled. Mowing will go a long way toward controlling unwanted weeds and grasses, but treatment with the herbicides Slay, for broadleaf weeds, and Arrest Max, for grasses, is simple. It will let you keep your plot almost free of unwanted competition with one or two applications

per year. Not only will your plots look better, but they'll provide more and higher-quality forage without weeds and grasses competing for nutrients, sunlight and moisture.

13 It lasts many years and persists throughout the seasons. Sure, I love the excitement of planting and watching annuals such as Tall Tine Tubers or PowerPlant almost shoot up from the ground. But there's also something to be said for a forage that lasts three to five years and doesn't require much work every year. That's typical for Imperial Whitetail Clover. I stretched that to six years in one memorable case.

This product has a long life and also produces forage almost 12 months per year. In many regions, deer actually feed year-round on Imperial Whitetail Clover. For more northern climates, 10 months is typical, with a brief dormant period in January and February.

14 It was created specifically for deer and is continuously being improved. Dr. Wiley Johnson spent more than seven years developing Insight, the first genetically new species of clover invented for deer, and included in Imperial Whitetail Clover. Following in his footsteps, Dr. Wayne Hanna, current director of forage research, has improved and developed still more new varieties by selecting the hardiest plants that offered the best benefits for deer after extensive testing, cross-breeding and culling.

More than 30,000 plants were studied in recent tests, finally being narrowed down to 50. Eventually, a small fraction of those will go into Imperial Whitetail Clover.

15 It's aesthetically attractive. This one might not matter to everyone. But I look out from my office at food plots every day, and the beauty of clover shimmering in shafts of golden morning sunlight or sparkling with silver dew after a rain offers a joy I'll never tire of.

I don't know a lot about art, but looking at a field of clover provides the kind of aesthetics I can appreciate. Backlit by sunlight, the clover sometimes seems to glow with an inner light and vibrant green hue that no oils or watercolors can ever match.

16 It creates hubs of rutting activity during breeding season. Throughout much of the year, does typically claim the best forage a parcel offers and bed in nearby brushy or grassy areas. Bucks cede that choice habitat to the ladies and choose more remote, isolated spots with thicker cover.

That changes when the rut kicks in. Bucks abandon their summer core hideouts at this time and gravitate to areas with doe concentrations. I've found that one of the most consistent places they visit to locate does is an Imperial Whitetail Clover plot or, better, a cluster of several such plots with brushy cover between them.

These areas become hubs of breeding activity as mature bucks search for concentrations of does near prime feeding spots. And they become killer locations for an all-day sit when November arrives.

Sure, we hunting writers come up with all kinds of complicated formulas and detailed advice for hunting the rut and dealing with lockdown. But you can do far worse than setting up and watching a brushy edge or funnel of cover between a brace of Imperial Whitetail Clover plots.

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BOYS TO MEN

...deer hunting can help.

By Zeke Pipher

Photos by the Author

Remember the days when men were men? They dressed with self-respect and style. They honored their elders. They opened doors for women and greeted each other with a strong handshake. They often wore beards and rarely scarves and skinny jeans. They worked hard and took pride in their careers. And they weren't afraid to move out of their parents' house, get married, remain faithful to their wife, have children and teach their children how to grow up big and strong. Remember those days? You might not. They were quite some time ago.



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The author and his son, Aidan Pipher about to enter a ground blind.

Today, more boys are refusing to travel the ancient paths of masculinity. This isn't merely a phenomenon in our culture. Boys who refuse to grow up have earned some creative labels in many first-world countries. In Germany, they're called residents of "hotel mama." In Italy, they're called *bamboccioni*, which means big babies. In Japan, they're called *parasaito shinguru*, which means single parasite. Here in America, they are sometimes called "kidults" and "adultescents."

Whatever you want to call these grown-up children, we can agree they haven't entered manhood very well. We can also agree that fathers, grandfathers and father figures need to help reverse this trend by doing a better job passing the torch of masculinity. Only men can teach boys how to become men, and this is where deer hunting can help.

Deer Hunting and Torch-Bearing

My son Aidan is 13 and on the cusp of becoming a man. In the past year, he's grown about six inches, started to talk in a deeper voice and has asked me to teach him how to use a chainsaw, butcher knife and gas pedal. He's eager to become a man, and I've been using the deer woods to show him some of the basics. Specifically, our sport is helping me teach him how to take responsibility, support his friends and family, push past challenges and display integrity.

Take responsibility: When you're a child, you don't have to work for your meals, clothing, air conditioning or transportation. Other

people take care of everything for you, and when you're young, they're glad to do it. However, when you hit your late teens, 20s and 30s, they're not so glad to do it anymore.

When Aidan was young — between 5 and 10 — I did everything for him to get him outside and into the deer woods. I built the stands, trimmed the lanes, washed his clothes in scent-free soap and packed his snack packs (with quiet treats). When I shot a deer, I field-dressed it, dragged it to the truck, butchered it and put it in the freezer. Aidan mostly watched, occasionally jumping in to help wash the venison or hand me a piece of tape for a package. That was when he was a child. Now, he works alongside me in every field-to-freezer task, and this past year, he got a taste of the payoff.

One Sunday afternoon in November, I drove Aidan to a stand that he had helped me assemble. He climbed up the ladder and got situated. Then I drove away. It was the first night he sat in a tree stand by himself, and what a night it turned out to be. Just a few minutes before quitting time, a 5-year-old buck came trotting down the trail with its head thrust forward in typical rutting fashion. Aidan stood, waited for the buck to present his side and then grunted to stop him. He centered the reticle on the front shoulder and made a good shot with his crossbow. The buck ran into the woods, and Aidan thought he heard him fall about 20 seconds later. We picked up Aidan's mom and sisters, and then Aidan led the way in tracking the deer. When he found it, he offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God. When he finished, we each grabbed a side of the rack and dragged it out of the trees together.



Aidan Pipher and Claire Pipher with their two deer mentioned in the article. Their friend Grace Musgrave looks on.



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The author helps his son Aidan shoot a youth bow.

He helped me hang, process and package it.

At the end of the night, when the deer was in the freezer, and we had sore backs, Aidan hugged me and said, “Am I a deer hunter like you now, Dad?”

He stood tall, and his eyes were bright. I could see his joy and pride. “You absolutely are, man. I’m proud of you.”

Support friends and family: The same night Aidan shot his buck, his 11-year-old sister shot her first deer ever. After we dropped Aidan off at his stand, Claire and her best friend, Grace, helped me tuck a ground blind into a row of cedar trees. Just before sunset, a year-old buck stepped from the trees and browsed toward our blind. When he was 40 yards out, I gently squeezed Claire’s knee and whispered, “You ready to shoot?”

Her little body started shaking. She nodded and whispered, “I think so.”

Claire lifted the crossbow and made a great shot. The bolt flew through the deer’s chest. I spun around and said, “Claire, you did it. You got him for sure.” Pandemonium broke out — Claire and Grace were squealing, the blind was shaking and I was hugging and high-fiving both of them. We waited until dark to climb into the pickup and drive to pick up Aidan. At that point, we had no idea Aidan had punched his tag. When we pulled up, I hopped out of the truck and walked to the base of his stand. The first thing Aidan asked was, “How did Claire do? Did she get a deer?”

That was my proudest moment of the night. Aidan, who had just shot a 140-class whitetail 15 minutes earlier, wanted to know how his sister’s hunt went. He knew she had hunted hard for two years

without punching a tag. He knew how many hours she’d spent practicing with the crossbow and looking through recipe books for what she would do with her venison. He was genuinely more excited to hear about her hunt than to tell us about his.

This world is so competitive. People seem to need to outperform others to feel good about themselves. I’m fortunate, because many of my closest deer hunting buddies are not this way. My children are getting the chance to watch me and my friends celebrate each other’s success, and they’re picking up this vision for themselves. I’m thankful for this sport for giving my son this picture of what it means to be a supportive brother, son and friend.

Push past challenges: Anyone who has hunted more than one season knows that you won’t find success in the woods if you don’t greet challenge with a smile and a firm handshake. For the first four years of his hunting career, Aidan used a crossbow. A crossbow doesn’t kick or make a loud noise, but it requires him to learn how to get close to a whitetail before he takes a shot. I love the challenges that hunting deer with a crossbow have posed to my son. He’s had to figure out scent control, wind direction and deer vocalizations. He’s had to learn how to dress warmly so he could sit on a stand for a couple of hours when it’s cold. He’s had to practice patience and get used to the fact that he will not shoot — or even see — something each time he goes out. He’s even had to hone his abilities to move slowly and quietly in stands that aren’t perfectly concealed, or that have noisy creaks and pops.

If you’re looking for an easy way to acquire meat, go shopping. But if you’re looking for a way to challenge your son and occasionally pack

some crazy-healthy venison in the freezer, put a bow or crossbow in his hand, and point him toward the deer woods.

Display integrity: When I was a young sportsman, I made a few mistakes and “pushed past” a few game laws. I regret each of those choices. I didn’t do anything severe, but those moments were enough to bother my conscience and teach me that I don’t enjoy breaking laws. The air smells fresher and the venison tastes better when my integrity is intact.

Deer hunting is giving me a chance to teach Aidan about integrity and the pleasure of having a clean conscience. We’ve had long talks on the tailgate about ethical issues such as not crossing a fence if you don’t have permission, never buddy-hunting on someone else’s tag and not killing something just to kill something. I’ve encouraged him to honor his landowners and leave their property cleaner than when he arrived. And I’ve told him to do his best to observe game laws and the rules of the sport, and if he messes up, to be honest about it and set things right.

There’s nothing the grace of God can’t see us through if we have integrity and humility. These are deep and important values, and I’m grateful to deer hunting for giving me a chance to pass them to my son.

Guns, Bows and Torch-Bearing

Back when men were men, boys often entertained themselves with a .22 rifle, a long-bow and a patch of trees under a big blue sky. Today, we’re putting joysticks, smartphones and remote controls in the hands of our sons. We’re keeping them inside, surrounded by screens, and then wondering why they’re not learning to work hard, overcome challenges and enjoy creation. This isn’t complicated math, and it all adds up.

It’s on our shoulders as men to teach our boys how exciting, abundant and multifaceted manhood can be. Women play equally important roles in boys’ lives, but women can’t teach boys how to become men. Only we men can do that. And deer hunting can help — if we’ll get them out there and pass the torch. 🔥

Zeke Pipher is a pastor and author from Nebraska. His two latest books, *The Wild Man* and *Wild Mountain Tribe* help grandfathers, fathers and father figures impart a vision for masculinity to the younger generation.

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Creating A Woodland Food Plot Paradise

The task isn't easy, but you can overcome challenges by rolling up your sleeves and getting to work.

By **Jeremy Flinn**

Photos by the Author

I saw what would eventually be the first land I owned in early April. Nestled on the side of a mountain in western Pennsylvania, there was still a trace of snow in the woods from a late arctic blast. The area was about as barren as it would be during the year, yet I saw the potential.

My future house sat about 75 yards from an old log landing, which was used when the property was timbered 15 years earlier. I'll be honest, it looked rough. The ragged surface from the dozers left little to no topsoil. Rocks the size of quarters to tires speckled the opening. A

mass section of mixed briars was about the only thing growing, aside from a couple of trees. But there was potential. It helped that as I turned to go back to the house, some deer jumped out of the brush. Sold.

As much as I would have liked to jump into planting plots, I prioritized moving in, and working on the house and career. But as spring led into summer, the dreams of potential food plots grew into well-planned strategies. However, planting a woodland food plot is not that easy. From shading issues to poor soil, the task has many challenges. You can overcome them, but you'd better come ready to roll up your sleeves, as hard work will germinate success.

Site Selection

Food plot site selection can be one of the most critical steps. It's difficult to ignore thoughts of a great hunting spot that might turn into a honey hole with the addition of a food plot, but it's not that



The author was able to take an overgrown, rocky, old log landing and turn it into an extremely productive food plot.

easy. Site selection in woodland food plots might be the most limiting factor.

Let's start with the most obvious: area. The area in which you plant a woodland food plot must be open or have the potential to open. Much of that revolves around your equipment. My log-landing spot provided an open yet overgrown opportunity. But many folks won't have that. In such cases, break out the chainsaw, and get to work. You don't have to cut every tree, as an oak or two might be great for acorn production. Just consider the ability of sunlight to reach the ground. That's key to plot growth.

In addition to the area, the soil is likely the next limiting factor. From extreme sand or clay consistency to rocky areas or a lack of topsoil, many soil issues are not fixable. If the soil is acidic or lacks nutrients, you can manipulate it through lime and fertilizer.

What you can't change (at least not easily) is lack of topsoil or rock-laden areas. But in some cases, especially wooded food plots, you must work with what you have. My log landing lacked topsoil and was lit-

tered with rocks. To create a successful food plot, seedbed preparation would be critical.

Seedbed Preparation

I'll admit, until that point in my food plot experience, I had been lucky, planting on good soil and having equipment at my fingertips. I probably should have worked on the woodland plot for a couple of years, but because I was impatient, I planned to complete it in a few weekends.

At any new food plot site, one of the first tasks is to clear vegetation and, potentially, trees. For me, it was a nasty thicket of briars. As a biologist, I almost hated myself for doing that, as I know it was likely good bedding cover and winter food. However, it was also the best (and maybe only) place for a plot on the property. If you're dealing with brush and leafy vegetation, it's not too bad. I went after it with a weed eater and glyphosate. I sprayed glyphosate liberally, and after



When planting woodland food plots, choosing food plot species that are easy to establish and grow quickly, such as annual clovers and brassicas, can sustain the likely poor soil conditions and heavier deer pressure.

seven to 10 days, went in and cut down as much as I could.

That obviously created a lot of vegetation on the ground, which will block sunlight to a point. To get a cleaner seedbed, I used a prescribed fire. Though many are fearful of using fire — and obviously, be careful — it can be one of the greatest tools for food plotters preparing a seedbed. Successful burns have many factors, especially during a hot and humid summer. Wait for dry — but not too dry — conditions, a steady yet not overly strong wind and proper assistance to control the fire. When run correctly, all organic matter is broken down into a form that's much easier to incorporate into the soil.

Because my log landing lacked topsoil, I need every bit I could get. Though burning improved the situation, I still had to work the soil. With so much rock, a disc or tiller would be ineffective or bring more rock to the surface. And I didn't have a tractor, which put a damper on that. For many woodland food plots, equipment access is extremely limited. However, many folks can get a four-wheeler or UTV into tight areas. I armed mine with a steel harrow drag. I probably looked like a NASCAR driver running circles, but with that compacted, rocky

ground, I didn't have much success. After hours of constant dragging, I was still not happy with the result. Though way better than at the beginning, I wasn't seeing the smooth, broken soil to which I was accustomed. But you work with what you are given. After three weekends, it was finally time to put seed in the ground.

Species Selection and Planting

It's difficult to believe I was finally ready to plant. But all that work built up to anxiety and fear of failure. What if nothing grew? I knew the soil was poor, and there was only so much I could do. Choosing the right food plot species was critical. I was not sure if I'd be planting the plot every year or just maintaining it, so I wanted a perennial and an annual.

My go-to perennial in almost every food plot in any soil condition is Imperial Whitetail Clover. It's by far one of the hardiest food plot varieties I've used, and it provides a great source of nutrition to deer almost year-round. However, a straight perennial plot has some flaws, so I always make sure to add some fast-growing annuals. On the new property, that was mainly because I had no idea how many deer would use the plot.

Though small, the property joined almost 200,000 acres of contiguous mountain woodlands. The area had no agriculture, few-to-no-food plots and, at best, a neighbor's garden other than natural foods. Further, I didn't know the germination success because of soil conditions. To pump up the biomass volume, I mixed in some Whitetail Institute Winter-Greens. That tonnage producer would grow faster than the Imperial Whitetail Clover and almost act as a cover crop. As deer began to hit the Winter-Greens, the clover could establish. That assured that come spring, there would be a great clover plot standing to help build deer health coming out of winter.

I took a soil sample, and I added the appropriate amount of lime and I used a standard Triple 19 fertilizer. With small seed, I drove over the plot with the ATV but didn't drag it in. Planting was planned to coincide with rain, and soon after, a soaking rain started the germination process. The anticipation of success was killing me. In fewer than four days, I saw the first signs of germination. The plot never looked back.

The Result

In September, after being paired with great weather, the plot soared. Excitement grew as deer began to visit the woodland food plot consistently. With October and November and the best hunting ahead, anticipation was high for the food plot to perform. Just before the Pennsylvania gun season, the attraction of the Winter-Greens exploded and deer were everywhere. By the beginning of February, the plot remained with some turnips bulbs and clover, and, with spring not far off, the Imperial Whitetail Clover would take off in the warm spring growing season.

Though not nearly as easy, that plot might have been my most satisfying. Maybe it was because it was on my land, but taking it from a raw, unfavorable piece of ground to a successful woodland food plot was exciting. Now, as I go into my second year, the only question is where else I should plant on this mountain. 🍂

Jeremy Flinn is a professional deer biologist. He has degrees from Penn State and Mississippi State.

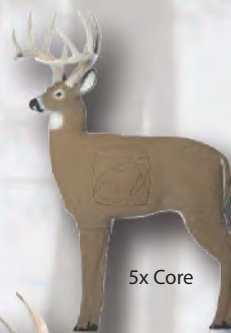


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A Buck of Many Lifetimes

By Jeff Hopkins, Iowa

Photos by the Author




I've been using Imperial Whitetail Clover for more than 20 years. I started using it when I lived in Maryland and I also used it in Kentucky when I moved there eight years ago. Four years ago, I moved to Iowa, and it's still my planting of choice.

Every place I've lived and used Imperial Whitetail Clover, it has proven to be the most preferred year-round food source for deer. Also, in every state I've used it, I've seen more deer. It has held deer on my land, and I've also noticed better-quality deer. In every area, it has proven to be extremely tolerant to cold and resilient to drought. I believe the nutrition Imperial Whitetail Clover provides is crucial to my success. It's the first food source to green up in spring, and the high protein it provides is vital to helping grow bigger-antlered bucks. It's available throughout the entire antler growing process, and ag crops aren't.

I was fortunate to kill the biggest buck ever off my Maryland farm with a bow. He scored 170-5/8 inches. (photo 1) When I lived in Kentucky, I got trail-camera pictures of a buck that scored about 180 to 190 inches, but he never came into bow range. I did kill a 155-inch 10-point there. Two years ago in Iowa, I killed my best buck to that point. It scored 183 inches. (photo 2)

This past season in Iowa, I was blessed to kill a buck of many lifetimes. He is a main-frame 12-point with 23 scoreable points. He was green-scored at 223-5/8 inches. (photo 3) We found his sheds from the previous year and rough-scored him at 164 inches. Amazingly, he put on almost 60 inches of antler in one year.

The best part of all this is that my son, Scott, is included in all aspects of planting and managing our land, and he's All In. He has learned that we will put more into the land than we take. He also killed a great buck this past year. It scored just over 163 inches. (photo 4)

Imperial Whitetail Clover is just one piece of the deer-management puzzle, but it's vital to our success. Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for producing a product that does exactly what it says it will. It helps me and my family have the best hunting we could dream of. 



REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

about Whitetail Institute products...

I currently use Imperial Whitetail Clover, Winter-Greens, Winter Peas Plus and Whitetail Oats Plus. The observations I have noticed are many; a lot more deer, much heavier antlers, bigger bucks and does and also a doe with three fawns. There is a period when the food plots experience a lull in activity when the acorns are falling. After that the plots are leveled. My

approach to planting and hunting food plots is different than most. I have four 1/2-acre plots very close to each other for variety and they are separated by thin swaths of timber. I hunt the trails going to and from them. I have added a few pictures to show the animals that use my plots. One shows deer digging through the snow to get to the Imperial Whitetail Clover. The increase in food has helped beyond my expectations! My Imperial Whitetail Clover plot gets the most consistent use day and night. Winter-Greens is incredible! They love it! Winter Peas Plus is every bit as good as your Winter-Greens. I planted Whitetail Oats Plus a little late, and I didn't get any rain for two weeks after planting it. To add insult to injury, the turkeys hit the seeds pretty hard. In spite of all that the Whitetail Oats Plus came up, and I was actually surprised how much the deer liked it. I'll be planting this one again, too.



Emile Dionne - New Hampshire

I wanted to share a success story. Two years ago, we started using Whitetail Institute products. We have used its soil tests and followed the suggested amendments. We have contacted Whitetail Institute support guys, and they have been very helpful in providing us with recommendations on how to go about planting. We planted a couple of acres of Imperial Whitetail Clover and Chicory Plus (now Fusion). Since that time, the deer and turkeys have been in the clover and chicory plots on a regular basis. Trail cameras have shown several nice mature deer.

My dad, Jeff Rauch, harvested one of our target bucks this past weekend in southern Indiana. We have had trail-cam pictures of this buck for the past two years. Last year, he was seen in daylight on one occasion. This past Saturday, he made the mistake of entering one of our plots in daylight. He came within range, and my dad was able to harvest the big guy with his crossbow. We couldn't be happier!

Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for all your advice and products! You have earned a lifelong customer.

Josh Rauch - Indiana



I use No-Plow, Secret Spot, Bow Stand and Pure Attraction. Does Whitetail Institute stuff work? See photo of one of the bucks on my Pennsylvania property. Thank you again, Whitetail Institute.

Larry Griner - Pennsylvania

I have been managing a hunting club property for about four years. Every year, we plant a variety of annual and perennial products from Whitetail Institute. With a combination of these powerful forage products and the use of 30-06 mineral, we have some quality mature bucks on the property. This year, we were fortunate enough to harvest two mature 12-point bucks thanks to the use of Whitetail Institute products. Photo 1 is me with my buck I took off an Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot. He scored 149-3/8 B&C. Photo 2 is my friend, Mike Shaffer, with his buck that he took off an Alfa-Rack Plus food plot. His buck scored 159-2/8 B&C. Thank you Whitetail Institute for producing products that make every deer hunters dream come true.

Donny Frasier - Virginia



I have been using Imperial Whitetail Clover for six years, and the results have been amazing. It has attracted deer in that I have never seen before. Our first year after planting it, my boy shot an 8-point that we had never seen before on our property. The last two years I have been seeing this nontypical eating at the food plot, but then he disappears early in the bow season. This year he returned in late December. I was able to get a shot at him between his bedding area and my Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot. Imperial Whitetail Clover and persistence paid off. Enclosed is a photo of my buck of a lifetime. He has 19 scoreable points.

Kenny Weiland - Arkansas



We have been using Whitetail Institute products for 12 years now, and lately we have been pouring on the 30-06 mineral in strategic mineral lick locations on the property. The products do great things for our hunting success! Building a Whitetail Paradise is nearly as rewarding as the hunt!

The field and property net between 300 to 400 pounds of boned-out venison every year.

Getting the big bucks to slip up during the rifle season post-rut is indeed a challenge. This guy made a four-second mistake that ended my season on a great note. I was getting ready to shoot a doe when he came flying out of the brush 90 yards away at a full run, going somewhere in a big hurry. I turned the gun on him and fired with my .308 right before he was about to disappear behind a big balsam back into the brush.

Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for your great products and for all that you do for hunters!

Desiree Howell - Wisconsin

I was bowhunting in Kentucky last year. My son, Michael and his family, and my wife decided to join me there for Thanksgiving.

I asked my son if he wanted to go hunting, as the day before was his birthday. So, we were walking to the food plot and when we got there, I was in front. This fine buck was standing in my Imperial Whitetail Clover plot tending two does. We were behind some cover, so I handed my 270 and told him there was a shooter in the plot.

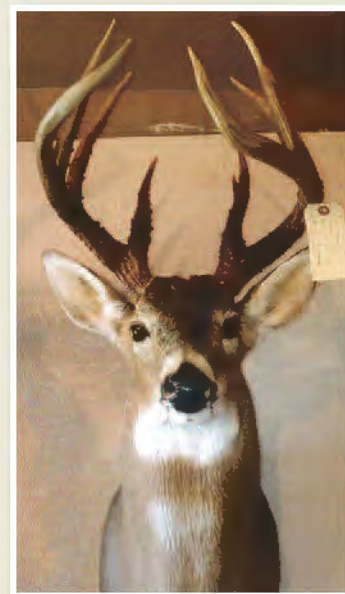
My son put the crosshairs on him and squeezed the trigger, and boom! The buck was still standing there and didn't flinch, with his eyes locked on the does. I thought Michael missed and told him to shoot again. He looked at me and said that deer is dead... he just doesn't know it yet.

Again I said, "Put another round into him." Michael said, "He's done Dad!" About that time, the does must have heard us and they started walking off into the woods and he followed. I was just sick as I was watching this great buck just walking away and thinking my son was going to learn a hard hunting lesson.

The buck walked about 40 yards into the woods and got the wobbles and fell dead. My son said, "I knew I made a good shot dad."

When we got to the buck, sure enough, heart shot. Michael's buck was a 152-inch gross 9-point, with only 13-1/2-inch inside spread, but tons of mass and tine length.

It was my son's first hunt in several years, and it lasted about 45 seconds. Happy birthday son, Thanks for a memory I'll never forget!



Eric Pruitt - Kentucky

(Continued on page 65)

WHITETAIL NEWS READERS ARE DIFFERENT

By Charles J. Alsheimer

Photo by the Author

Deer hunting in North America has never been better. The whitetail population is flourishing in most of the country, hunting equipment is more advanced than ever and interest in deer management is at an all-time high. This interest stems from an explosion of ideas that greatly influence landowners and hunters.

The modern era of deer management began with the post-World War II generation of deer biologists and hunters. The traditional approach to management that was widely used from the 1940s to the 1980s was far from perfect, but it laid the foundation for quality deer management, which receives more attention each year.

Vision Plus Effort Equals Success

Needless to say, whitetail management in North America has been a journey. The journey hasn't always been easy, but it has included a lot of change and a tremendous amount of progress, with much of the

progress driven by a handful of visionaries. One of the biggest visionaries is Ray Scott, founder of Bass Anglers Sportsman Society and Whitetail Institute of North America. Regarding the latter, it's safe to say Scott's vision to take deer management to the next level is responsible for much of the quality deer management movement today.

"Build it and they will come" is a quote that can be applied to Scott. He knew his vision of having great seed products for landowners and deer hunters would require the best possible product, a great business plan and knowledgeable people committed to carry out his vision. And build it he did. He left no stone unturned, and what Whitetail Institute has accomplished is one of hunting's great success stories.

Scott believed that if you want the best, you have to create the best. How did he do it? To produce the best product in the food plot industry Scott invested heavily in research to come up with Imperial White-tail Clover, referred to by many as the gold standard of food plots. He didn't nibble around the edges. He jumped in with both feet, working closely with Dr. Wiley Johnson, one of America's leading plant geneticists, to come up with a clover specifically engineered to meet the whitetail's nutritional needs.

Good to Great

It would have been easy for Scott to

*The willingness to invest time, money and effort into improving the land and the wildlife that live on it are what set **Whitetail News** readers apart.*



rest on his laurels after the introduction of Imperial Whitetail Clover, but he instead followed that product's success with a series of cutting-edge seed and supplement products to cater to the needs of food plot practitioners and deer managers. To accomplish that, he relied heavily on what brought him success with Imperial Whitetail Clover — great research. Out of his company's research arm came other great product offerings. As much as anything, this is why Whitetail Institute's products are sought out and used by serious food plotters across North America.

Whitetail Oats is a seed used in several Whitetail Institute products that came about through Whitetail Institute's vast contacts in the international seed business. One of the executives at a huge ag company was impressed with what Whitetail Institute had done with Imperial Whitetail Clover and contacted Whitetail Institute and asked if they had any plans to do anything with an oat-based product. When he heard that Whitetail Institute was already doing research with oats, he told them of a friend of his who was a university professor that had an oat that had proven to be so preferred by deer, they had to remove it from grain production trials. Whitetail Institute took it from there. They gained exclusive access to the oat variety, tested it, and found out that it was indeed the most attractive oat they had ever tested as well as winter hardy and high in sugar. Today Whitetail Oats Plus is a staple for many serious food plotters. It's used heavily on my farm and all across the U.S.

Knowledge is Power

"Nothing happens until something is sold" is one of my favorite quotes, because if you can't show consumers why a product is worth purchasing, success in business is not possible. To educate folks with an interest in food plots and deer management, Whitetail Institute launched *Whitetail News* 25-plus years ago. Over two-and-a-half decades later, it has become the go-to publication for experienced food plotters and those wanting to begin their food plot journey. Now read by hundreds of thousands of hunters and landowners, it addresses the why and how of seed selection, habitat improvement and deer management.

When I asked Whitetail Institute's Steve Scott about the magazine's readership, he said, "We have folks who have been getting *Whitetail News* since the very first issue. They came on board before the many benefits of food plots were well known, so in many ways, they were pioneers along with us. I'd have to say that the majority of our readership is serious about everything they do to manage their whitetail populations. Even small landowners want to learn all they can to give all of their wildlife the very best in the way of food. Whether they are large or small landowners, our clients are true givers who put their money, effort and time into making their land better for all the animals that live on the property they manage. I view our readers as true salt-of-the-earth people who give a lot of praise to God, and most of them enjoy the work managing their land requires."

Matt Harper, of Afton, Iowa, is the regional sales manager for a huge corporation, which manufactures vitamins, trace minerals and antibiotic premixes for the livestock feed industry. In addition, he farms and is one of America's top whitetail deer hunters, as well as a frequent writer for *Whitetail News*. To say he knows soil, food plots and whitetails would be a vast understatement. At one point in his career Harper, was on staff with the Whitetail Institute, which gave him a lot of exposure to this *Whitetail News*' clientele.

"During my time at Whitetail Institute, I had a chance to meet many hunters and landowners," he said. "There are a lot of folks who come in as a novice, and what I'd notice is that they were hungry for information and the whole process of managing their property, especially when it came to the whitetail's nutrition requirements. Consequently, I was able to see firsthand how the *Whitetail News* benefited not only those just starting out but also advanced food plotters who were looking for cutting-edge concepts.


"When I graduated college, I went to work in the agriculture industry and became interested in the whole food plot concept. About the same time, I began reading *Whitetail News*, and because of my agricultural background was able to see that their writers knew their stuff. Then during the time I worked for them, I was able witness the research and quality control that went into their products. So, over the years, what has impressed me most about Whitetail Institute is that their products are heavily researched with special emphasis on quality control. This is why I have confidence in their products."

Lyn Beiler is one of the folks Steve Scott refers to as salt of the earth. Lyn and his wife, Evonne, operate a state-of-the-art hog farm in southwestern New York. When I met him, he told me, "I'm just a pig farmer who's not very smart." It didn't take me long to realize he was just being humble, because when it comes to farming and whitetail hunting, he has few peers.

Beiler contacted me a few years ago after I'd written an article about my experience with Whitetail Oats Plus. After our discussion, he purchased the seed and planted it in some of his food plots, after which he informed me of his success using it. When I asked him what caused him to begin using Whitetail Institute products, he said, "I've always worked hard to provide our farm's whitetails with the best possible food options. So, when I began reading *Whitetail News*, I was quickly impressed with the caliber and variety of its articles. This caused me to try the products, and after witnessing great results, I have become a big fan of their seeds."

Servanthood

As good as *Whitetail News* is at informing readers, the thing that shines brightest to me is the service team Whitetail Institute has assembled. After more than 30 years in the hunting industry, this is what impresses me as much as anything about the company. Having talked to hundreds of *Whitetail News* readers during my career, I've realized several things about its readership: They are serious, they love the products and the variety of articles in each issue of *Whitetail News*, and they rave about the company's service. To me and many others, it's the latter that is Whitetail Institute's frosting on the cake. Its team of service professionals is second to none and on hand to help all who call for advice. As Steve Scott said, "All of us here know that the customer is king, so when the phone rings, we go out of our way to make sure we help in any way we can."

Famous theologian John Wesley once said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." In many ways, Wesley's quote sums up the Whitetail Institute's success. Since 1988, the staff at *Whitetail News* has educated landowners and hunters about cutting-edge product offerings and the knowledge required to have better deer and become better deer hunters and stewards of what God has entrusted to us. 

Crop Rotation:

The Value and Importance of Moving Things Around

A good crop rotation program boosts soil quality, creates productive food plots and helps maintain a healthy deer herd

By Matt Harper

You've probably heard someone say, "You must be a good steward of the land." So what does that mean?

When I was very young, I was taught that we were caretakers of the land we farmed. The taking and giving relationship with our land was of equal importance. That played out in many ways, such as fertilizing our crop fields to replace nutrients or vigorously fighting noxious weeds that, if left unchecked, could take over and destroy the farm.

To be honest, I really didn't understand the full meaning of stewardship. Of course, I knew that fertilizing would make crops grow better, and making sure the cows didn't overgraze the pastures meant the pasture would stay productive. As I grew older, I began to become more interested in the why, in a broader sense. When I bought my first piece of ground, the why became apparent. I really only bought the right to use the land and collect the resources from that farm. That land was there long before I came into the picture and will be there long after I'm gone. But during the time I "own" the farm, I'm really the steward of the land and its resources, and in charge of the delicate balance of giving and taking. That's the definition of a steward: some-

one who's in charge of taking care of something.

With a farm, everything revolves around the soil, because everything on that farm depends on it. The grass, the crops, the trees and all plant life depends on the soil. In turn, the animals that eat the vegetation and, further, the predators that eat those animals complete the cycle. Even the insects, bees and birds depend on the soil. Without soil, a farm is nothing but an empty space. That's why so much time and attention is given to building and maintaining healthy dirt.

Of course, many other management practices come with running a farm, but it starts with the soil. It's the foundation.

Soil Management

Soil management is a massive topic, with hundreds if not thousands of methods and practices you can implement. In fact, you can earn a doctorate in soil management and still not be fully knowledgeable of all soil management practices that pertain to specific soil types or regions. However, you can understand and implement a few universal basics in most soil management programs. At the top of the list is soil fertility. Plants derive nutrients from the soil and use them for growth. The most common of these are nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, although there are many other minor (but often important) nutrients, such as zinc, magnesium and boron.

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer



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Photo by Matt Harper

A field with both PowerPlant and Winter-Greens, which I rotate back and forth each year is a great crop rotation practice and ensures high quality food is available almost all year.

rent and subsequent crops grown there.

Crop Rotations

You might wonder why I'm just now addressing the title topic. The aforementioned points are related to and can be influenced by crop rotation. The definition of crop rotation is fairly self-explanatory. It's the practice of substituting one type of crop with another in a field or food plot. But the effective practice of crop rotation is a bit more complex, as many considerations come into play. Before we get into specific rotation strategies, let's discuss crop rotation as it applies to aspects of soil management.

The most commonly practiced crop rotation in farming is corn and soybean rotation. One of the main reasons for that is that soybeans are considered a soil builder. Being a legume, they are a nitrogen-fixing plant type.

Almost all organisms require nitrogen for protein, amino acid and nucleic acid production, along with other vital components that contain nitrogen. There's an abundance of N₂ (nitrogen gas), but most organisms cannot use it unless it's converted into NH₃ (ammonia).

As plants deplete the soil of these nutrients, the nutrients must be replenished. Some nutrient replenishment can happen naturally, but that takes a long time, and when the ground is being used for production crops, you must apply fertilizer to keep the soil nutrient-rich and able to support optimal production. You've probably heard of aerating your yard or have seen aerator marks on a golf course. Healthy soil that can support productive crop production requires oxygen, and through time, soil can become compacted or root-locked, creating several problems.

First, compacted soil does not soak up rain and has a tendency to drain quickly, losing the opportunity for valuable moisture. Second, compacted soil does not have adequate oxygen, so breaking the soil up with a plow, disc or chisel plow will help aerate the soil, but there are other options we will discuss later. Finally, unless soil is managed properly, it can become laden with pathogens such as fungal, bacterial or pest diseases. Although some kinds of microorganisms are vitally important in healthy soil, others are parasitic or cause disease issues in the crops the soil supports. Those pathogens are harbored in the soil and can have a negative effect on the cur-



Photo by Matt Harper

***Clover in rotation:** This is a big 3-acre plot where I plant different annuals but always have Imperial Whitetail Clover in the rotation.*



Photo by Matt Harper

In addition to being extremely attractive to deer, the large tuber root of a radish like this can be a useful tool for breaking up soil.

Legumes contain a nitrogen-fixing rhizobia bacteria that converts N_2 to NH_3 . These bacteria live in nodules on the roots of legumes, and legumes use the converted nitrogen for growth. That's why legumes such as soybeans, clover and alfalfa do not require nitrogen fertilizer. When the legume dies, the nodules release nitrogen into the soil that can be used by the next crop that will be planted in that field.

Corn requires a high amount of nitrogen for optimal production, so planting corn in a field that was previously in soybeans means nitrogen fertilization can be decreased, thus saving the farmer money and producing a healthier soil. That relationship is not limited to corn and soybeans but can be found in any legume and non-legume crop rotation. For example, if you have an Imperial Whitetail Clover field that needs to be replanted, a crop such as Winter-Greens, PowerPlant or Whitetail Oats Plus, require nitrogen fertilization and will benefit from the nitrogen left by the Imperial Whitetail Clover field.

As mentioned, compacted soil can cause poor food plot performance but can be fixed through various aeration practices. Although mechanical aeration is effective and should not be omitted from your soil management program, various forage types can help break up and aerate the soil. Food plot plantings that contain larger tuber root structures, such as Tall Tine Tubers or the new Beets & Greens from the Whitetail Institute will break up the soil as they grow their bulbous root structure and at the same time naturally aerate the soil.

That application is effective when rotating out of a perennial that has been planted for three to five years, or for areas that have experienced minimum tillage for years. For example, if you're replanting an Imperial Alfa Rack Plus field that has been in production for five years, rotating into a product such as Tall Tine Tubers, Beets &



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Greens or Winter-Greens can help break up and aerate the soil. Also, if you have a field where you have planted Imperial No-Plow for two or three years with minimal tillage, Ambush or Winter-Greens would be a great option. Keep in mind that at some point, you'll still need mechanical aeration, but that type of crop rotation will help produce a more healthy soil.

The challenge of disease occurs with almost all plant types and food plots. Again, diseases are caused by pathogens such as fungi, bacteria, viruses and nematodes. Depending on the pathogen, diseases can damage the leaves, stems, roots and crown, and are sometimes highly visible. Other times, however, they are not. Weather conditions also affect the severity of diseases, with some diseases being more prevalent in wet, humid or dry conditions. Most pathogens live in and accumulate in the soil, so the combination of the right environmental conditions along with the total number of pathogens present will relate to the severity of disease issues.

Some pathogens can live in the soil for many years, but others die more quickly when the target host-plant variety is no longer present. Also, some diseases attack multiple family types of crops and forages. However, crop rotation can still help to prevent disease. In terms of food plot plantings, an effective disease management technique using rotation is to go from a legume to a non-legume or vice versa. Rotating crops can help diminish the likelihood of disease.

Rotation in Practice

How do you apply this information? If you're a farmer, rotating fields between corn and soybeans is not necessarily all that difficult in terms of planning. However, when devising your strategy for food plot rotation, many other factors come into play, such as perennial fields versus annual fields, what grows well in specific soil types and how those food plots are being hunted.

The first thing to consider is what plants work well in rotation with each other. I gave a few examples earlier, but there are many more to consider. The good thing is that the Whitetail Institute offers a large variety of annual and perennial plantings, many of which can be used in your food plot rotation. In general, I like to rotate between legume and non-legume species. Rotating Imperial Whitetail Clover or Alfa-Rack Plus with Winter-Greens, Ambush or Whitetail Oats Plus will work well, but you can also consider other options.

Alfa-Rack Plus generally grows better in well-drained soils, but Imperial Whitetail Clover grows better in heavier soils. Therefore, the crop you rotate with must also grow well in the same type of soil. For example, Winter-Greens works better in a well-drained soil, so it should be used in rotation with a legume that matches the same soil preference.

I think the trickiest part in developing a rotational plan when planting food plots occurs when you throw your hunting strategy into the mix. For example, let's say you have a food plot that's set up perfectly for hunting during the early to mid-season. Your choice of planting is usually Pure Attraction, Ambush or Whitetail Oats Plus. There could be some benefit to rotating between those products, but a better rotational option might be Winter Peas Plus or even PowerPlant. Winter Peas Plus are a legume, and PowerPlant contains a specifically selected forage soybean (also a legume) that work great as a hunting plot during the early and mid-season and fits nicely into the legume, non-legume rotation.

If you're working with bigger fields — one acre or more — depend-




Photo by Matt Harper

Adding fertilizer is a must to produce the best food plots. Doing a professional laboratory soil test ensures you distribute the correct amount of fertilizer and don't waste money on too much or the wrong fertilizer.

ing on herd size, other plots and browsing pressure, smaller fields can work, too. Another option is multi-variety plantings. Half of the field is in Winter-Greens and the other half in Winter Peas Plus, and you simply rotate them back and forth from year to year. This type of rotation can also be performed with a perennial. Simply plant half the field in a perennial and the other half in an annual non-legume. Maintain the perennial, and rotate the annual half of the plot between annual legumes and non-legumes.

At the point the perennial field needs to be replanted, switch halves of the field. I have a large 3-acre plot I broke up into specific food plot plantings I rotate each year. Fortunately, the soil lets me plant about whatever I want so I have up to five food plot types at any time. I have a half-acre of Imperial Whitetail Clover at all times and four plantings of annuals I rotate each year. Then every four to five years, I rotate out my Imperial Whitetail Clover field with a couple of the non-legume annual fields. This has been one of my most productive hunting areas through the years, as it offers an attractive food plot with a variety of different plants all season.

Summary

To me, being a good steward of the land you have leased, own or just have permission to hunt is as much a part of being a good hunter as practicing with your bow or setting up the perfect stand location. To get as much as the land can provide takes work, but it's rewarding beyond having a good hunting season. Land stewardship has many facets, and implementing a soil-healthy crop rotational program is just one. But it's important and can result in productive food plots, which, of course, equals a productive deer herd. 

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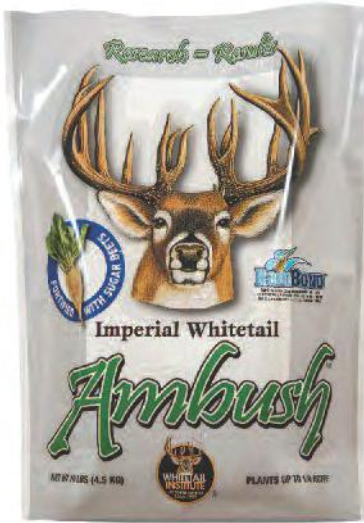
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Imperial Whitetail

Ambush™

Exceptional Attraction for Early and Late Hunting Season

By Whitetail Institute Staff



If you were to list the most attractive fall annual forage varieties for deer, several would be near or at the top. Whitetail Oats, winter peas and sugar beets would certainly be on that list. What if one food plot product contained all three,

plus a highly attractive clover and an exceptionally attractive forage you might have never heard of – white lupines. Sound too good to be true? The good news is the Whitetail Institute has just such a forage product in its lineup: Imperial Whitetail Ambush.

Ambush is designed with two overriding performance goals: attracting deer with a vengeance and providing them with vital nutrition during the early and late hunting seasons. Ambush can accomplish both at high levels because of its precise blend of major forage components.

Whitetail Oats: Most Whitetail Institute customers already know how exceptionally attractive Whitetail Oats are. A cold-tolerant oat variety, Whitetail Oats are high in sugar and so attractive to deer they had to be removed from university grain-production trials and shelved because deer browse them so heavily.

Winter Peas: The attractiveness of winter peas is also well known. However, some winter pea varieties are vastly more attractive to deer than others. The winter peas in Ambush are the most attractive vari-

eties the Whitetail Institute has ever tested.

Sugar Beets: Ambush also includes sugar beets, which increase variety in the overall stand and provide deer with sugars and other essential carbohydrates they crave for energy into the coldest months. The sugar beets in Ambush can even improve soil quality, as any of the huge underground beets that haven't been consumed by deer can help aerate the soil as they die and leave open spaces the spring after planting.

Annual Clover: Ambush also includes a small amount of the Whitetail Institute's annual clover to boost attraction even more by adding forage variety.

Sweet Lupines: Although there are hundreds of lupine species, only sweet lupines (meaning lupine varieties that are low-alkaloid) are appropriate for use as a forage planting for deer. And some sweet lupine varieties are vastly more attractive to deer than others.


Whitetail Institute Director of Operations, William Cousins explained the attractiveness and other outstanding benefits of the sweet lupine varieties in Ambush.

"The Whitetail Institute has been experimenting with sweet lupines for nearly a decade," he said. "Early in our testing, we found that there were big differences in how attractive different sweet lupine varieties are to deer. Deer would lightly browse most of the sweet lupine plants we tested, but only a very few proved so highly attractive that deer would devour them like a favorite candy. Ambush contains two of these exceptionally attractive sweet lupine varieties."


As Cousins explained, exceptional attractiveness isn't the only performance category in which the sweet lupines in Ambush excel.

"The sweet lupines in Ambush are also high in protein, and the high protein content and overall forage quality tends to remain high even as the plants mature," he said. "Since they're legumes, they are also excellent nitrogen fixers, and their strong tap root helps improve soil structure. They will even tolerate mildly acidic soil better than other legumes, which helps them produce even on poorer soils."

Ambush delivers protein, abundant energy and exceptional attraction during the early and late seasons. Ambush is available in 10-pound bags that will plant a quarter-acre and 40-pound quantities that will plant one acre. For more information about Ambush, go to whitetailinstitute.com, or call the Whitetail Institute at (800) 688-3030.

Note: The Whitetail Institute has sold out of Ambush long before the end of recommended planting dates every year since its introduction, so order right away if you don't want to miss out. 

FOOD PLOT PLANTING WITH AN ATV



To do hard food plot work, an ATV must have a large engine, 4-wheel drive, a low-range transmission, aggressive tires and a strong hitch system.

*Don't have a tractor?
An ATV might just fit your food plot needs.*

By J. Wayne Fears

Photos by the Author

You finally have a tract of land to manage for deer hunting, and you can't wait to locate and plant food plots. However, you must wait because you don't have the budget to buy a farm tractor and the needed implements.

Hold on. Don't give up yet. If you have an ATV or side-by-side, chances are you can still do some of the same things on your property you could accomplish with a tractor. Plus, you can get the ATV into remote places a tractor can't go. All you need to do is to shop for ATV farm implements that can turn your ATV or side-by-side into a workhorse. Many used models are available at reasonable prices.

The ATV as a Tractor

A new generation of deer hunters is discovering the year-round fun of managing habitat, including creating and planting food plots that will attract and nourish deer. Many of those hunters are buying or leasing land to manage for hunting, have inherited a farm or have family land to manage, or are joining hunting clubs that lease land they can manage. However, few of the new generation of hunters/deer managers have a farming background or have ever driven a tractor. Because of that lack of experience, there's a lot of confusion about the steps to take in developing and planting a food plot using an ATV.

Experts agree that for an ATV to be suitable for working a food plot, it must have at least a 450cc engine. Larger is better. It needs to be equipped with a low gear range, aggressive tire treads, four-wheel drive and a strong hitch mount. It requires a lot of horsepower to pull a long-tooth harrow or a set of discs through the soil while occasionally hitting roots or rocks. Also, ATV discs can weigh up to 300



Using an ATV cultipacker before and after spreading “small seeds” can help ensure good seed-to-soil contact and also prevents them from being planted too deep.

pounds, and pulling that weight through the soil can require a lot of muscle. You want enough strength in your ATV so it can do the job without being strained — that usually requires being in four-wheel drive and running in low gear — and you do not want the ATV to overheat.

I recently planted a half-acre remote food plot in Imperial No-Plow using a 4-by-4 that had an 812cc engine, a low-range transmission, aggressive tires and a strong hitch system. Using the appropriate implements, it performed like a small farm tractor.

Here’s a brief guide to the steps necessary to develop and plant a food plot using an ATV as a tractor.

1. Select Good Plot Locations

Many deer management plans call for at least one percent of the total acreage to be planted in managed food plots. (three to five percent is even better) It’s preferable that the plots not be in one block or just one section of the property. In fact, the food plots should be as equally distributed throughout the property as possible. That offers food to a higher percentage of animals.

The best way to locate food plot sites is to travel the property slowly on your ATV and view the area, looking for natural openings such as old fields, utility right-of-ways, log loading areas and small clearcuts. Study each potential site carefully. The more isolated the location, the better. Give a high priority to areas where the soil is rich and moisture is good, but not a wetland. Ideal food plot sites have an irregular tree line.

Use a GPS and mark the locations on a topo map, and record the sites in your wildlife management plan.

2. Prepare to Till the Plot

After you’ve selected food plot sites, it’s time to clean the sites and prepare to till the soil. The first rule of tilling is to clean a new or existing food plot site as much as possible so you can better evaluate what type machinery will be required to break and prepare the seedbed. This needs to be done a couple of months before the planting season. Using your side-by-side or ATV with a trailer is a convenient way to remove ground litter by hand. The trailer or a side-by-side with a bed can be kept close to the workers, minimizing cleanup time. Pick

up everything you can, including rocks, limbs and logs. You want to evaluate the bare ground.

If weeds and other vegetation cover the plot, you can use the ATV with a herbicide sprayer attached to quickly kill the competing plants. When dead, they can be plowed under or removed by hand.

ATV vs. Tractor

After the food plot is cleared, it will be easy to see what you're facing to get the plot tilled and the seedbed prepared. Can it be done with an ATV, or will it require a tractor? Ask these questions:

- Is the food plot site new?
- Is it in an old logging road or log landing?
- Is the site an old, overgrown field?
- Are there lots of stumps and roots in the plot?
- Are rocks as large as a grapefruit or larger present at the plot site?
- Is the soil a tight soil, such as red clay?
- Is the plot larger than three acres?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you had better plan to use a tractor with at least 30 horsepower and heavy discs, or contract with a local farmer to break the plot with a strong farm tractor and discs. Trying to use an ATV in most of those situations can be dangerous, frustrating and hard on equipment, resulting in a less-than-desirable crop. It's simply more than an ATV was designed to do.

However, if the plot is established and has been broken annually and planted in annual crops, or is in an area free of roots, stumps and large rocks, and the ground is a loose soil, such as a sandy loam, and has not been compacted by heavy truck traffic, you can probably use your ATV. That assumes the ATV meets the requirements to pull a heavy set of ATV-designed discs to break the ground and a harrow to prepare the seedbed.

3. Tilling a Seedbed

I've written many times that one of the most common mistakes food plotters make is not preparing a good seedbed. I consider poor seedbed preparation the No. 2 reason food plots fail, right after not following the recommendations of a soil test. Tilling a food plot should not be rushed. It will take several passes with the cutting disc to establish a good seedbed, but with patience, you can do it properly.

Remember to break the field when the soil is dry, and take your time. Using an ATV, you'll typically have to go over the field several times. Good seed-to-soil contact is essential for a productive food plot, and you want a level, fine-textured seedbed. When the soil is broken up, the next step is to level and smooth the seedbed.

4. Smoothing the Seedbed

Using a drag-type harrow, sometimes called a chain harrow, attached to your ATV, drag the food plot several times with the longer tines down to break up small clods and remove weeds, rocks and other natural debris. This dragging will also help level the plot.

Next, turn the harrow over, and use the short-tine or tine-less side, to drag the field several times to level it for seeding. It's often necessary to make three to four passes in various directions to harrow a plot properly.

Using a drag harrow takes time in a new food plot, as the tines will

need to be cleaned of weeds, grass, rocks and sticks from time to time. However, when you have completed the seedbed preparation, you can look at a clean, level, fine-textured field and know your seed has the best bed possible.

If you don't have access to a drag harrow, a section of chain-link fence attached to a heavy wooden timber can make a homemade harrow, sometimes called a drag.

5. Always Soil Test

The next step in planting a food plot can be where the greatest errors occur. During the many years I've spent working with landowners and hunting clubs, I've seen many food plots where the seedbed was properly prepared, but when it came time to fertilize and plant seeds, folks took shortcuts that resulted in a poor crop. The result was low usage by deer.

The best seeds and the best seedbed preparation will not create a quality food plot if you don't lime and fertilize according to a soil test. Several months before you're ready to plant your food plots, visit your cooperative extension service agent and get soil tests kits for your food plots or get professional soil test kits directly from the Whitetail Institute. Then, take your ATV and visit each food plot. Take a soil sample, following the instructions with the kit. Send the sample to the designated soils lab for analysis. The report you will receive from the lab will tell you exactly how much and what kind of fertilizer — and possibly lime — you will need on each food plot for the crop you intend to plant.

6. Lime and Fertilize According to Soil Test Results

After your seedbed is prepared, equip your ATV with a seeder/spreader mounted on the unit, or use a pull-behind seeder/spreader. These seeders can be used to not only spread seed but also to lime and fertilize the field. Lime, if necessary, and fertilize the plot following the soil test results and recommendations.


7. Plant According to the Recommended Rate

When a plot has been fertilized, wash out the seeder thoroughly, as lime and fertilizer residue can corrode a seeder quickly. Then, calibrate the seeder following the manufacturer's instructions so it will distribute the seed at the company's recommended rate. Too few or too many seeds per acre can result in a poor-quality food plot. Take your time to do it right.

8. Cover Seed Carefully

Using a cultipacker or homemade drag pulled behind your ATV, cover the seed according to the seed company's recommendation. Small seeds covered too deeply may not come up. Seed not covered enough can be eaten by crows, turkeys and other critters. Good seed-to-soil contact is essential for a high germination rate. If you're using a cultipacker and planting small seed like clover or brassica, it's usually best to cultipack before and after spreading the seeds.

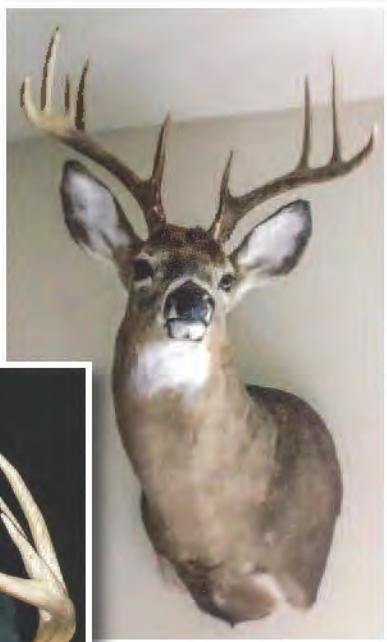
Finally, pray for rain.

Remember, you do not have to be a farmer to have good food plots, and much of the work can be done with an ATV and some basic equipment. 

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

Michael Savercool – Pennsylvania

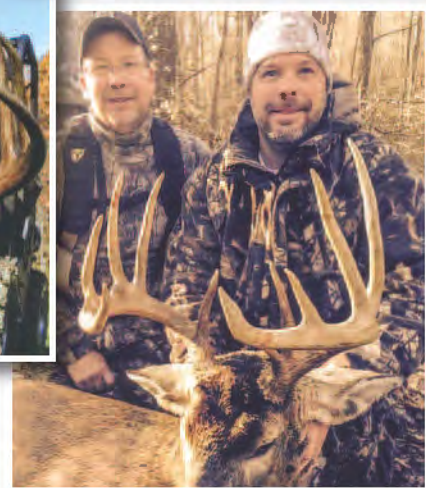
We started using Whitetail Institute products around 20 years ago with great success. We have harvested several nice bucks over those years and have many great trail-cam photos. The past two years we started using Winter-Greens and Tall Tine Tubers, and the deer love them. Enclosed are two photos from last year. The wall mount is the nice buck I harvested in archery season. He was follow-



ing a hot doe headed to the Winter-Greens. The second photo is my stepson Justin Seigler with his huge 10-point he rattled in on the last day of the rifle season in the same area. It grossed in the 150s and netted in the 140s after the 60-day drying period, which puts it in the Pennsylvania record book.

Danny Terril – Indiana

My wife and I have owned roughly 200 acres in southern Indiana for 10 years. For the past six years, I have strictly used Whitetail Institute products to help manage my deer and turkeys. We use Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion, not only for the deer but the turkeys also love them. We plant Winter-Greens in the fall,



which is an outstanding product, as it does very well during our Indiana late-season cold weather. In the past five years we have taken several 150-plus class bucks off of the property, and I can attribute this to good buck management and Whitetail Institute products. See attached photos of some of the bucks we've killed. Photo 1 is a 150-class buck I took with my bow last season.

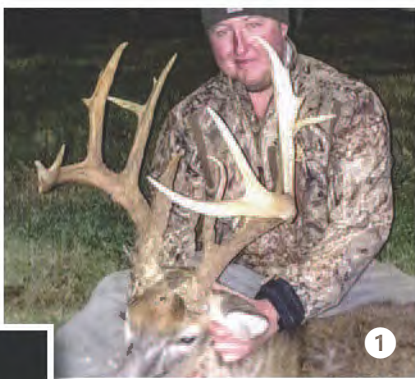
Gary Wohldmann – Missouri



We have been using Whitetail Institute products for about 20 years. Imperial Whitetail Clover, No-Plow, PowerPlant and Winter-Greens are Whitetail Institute products we have used. We have seen more deer and the bucks have gone from an average of about 140 pounds and 130 to 140 class to an average of 165 pounds and some 160 class and larger. I shot this buck 10 minutes after legal light on the second Saturday of last year's firearm season. The buck was leaving the Imperial Whitetail Clover field where a game camera had captured him when he was in velvet. The buck grossed 186-7/8 and netted 176-1/8 Boone and Crockett.

Matt Petersen – North Carolina

My first memory of planting a food plot took place about 20 years ago when I was about 10 years old. This strong and cherished memory took place with my Paw Paw, Buck Saul, on a small piece of property near our family farm in north central North Carolina. This memory is filled with my first smell of fresh turned moist dirt, the



sounds of a small international tractor pulling a light disc harrow, and Paw Paw letting me ride with him and steer the tractor. I can still remember Paw Paw telling me how much the deer loved the clover we were planting and how much better it was at attracting them than a corn pile. After the field was smoothed and it was time to spread the seed I still remember seeing the Whitetail Institute buck right there on the seed bag. At age nine, I'm sure I was thinking wow what a buck!

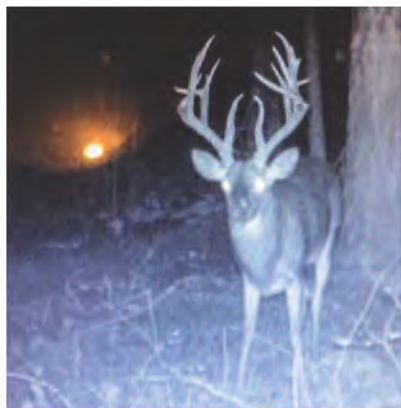
That small plot of Imperial Whitetail Clover led to my Paw Paw taking at least one, if not two bucks each season for many years. That experience with the Imperial Whitetail Clover, as well as seeing the results of all the bucks taken off the plot, exposed me to the magic of food plots.

Over the years, I tried different seed from various companies, along with my own blends, and the results kept leading me back to Whitetail Institute products. Whitetail Institute has everything you need to give deer and other wildlife an abundance of food that is attractive and nutritious to allow them to thrive.

My passion for wildlife led me to start my own wildlife and land-management company, Petersen's Wildlife Management. The central service our company provides is food plot installation, and we use Whitetail Institute products on all our farms. Simply put, they are the best!

After over a decade of a Whitetail Institute food plot program on our small farm the results have been better than we could have ever imagined. We grew the biggest buck ever taken in our area this past year. He was killed by a neighbor and at 4-1/2 years old scored 178 inches (photo 1). I also killed my best buck to date this year, a 3-1/2-year-old that scored 135 inches (photo 2). We also had two other bucks taken by a neighbor that scored 139 at 3 1/2 and 141 at 4 1/2. All these bucks fed on Whitetail Institute plantings their whole lives.

Bottom line — Whitetail Institute products work, and they will allow your deer and other wildlife to reach their full potential. Also the *Whitetail News* is a great resource for beginners and experts to learn and stay on the cutting edge of the art of food plotting and whitetail nutrition. Lastly, the customer service and troubleshooting Whitetail Institute provides is second to none. Thanks, Whitetail Institute, for what you do!



Matthew Ring – Kentucky

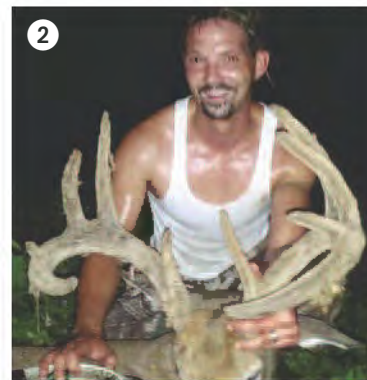


I nicknamed this buck "Tuff." He had caught my attention two years ago during the rut. I had filled my buck tag earlier in the season and was seeking a doe. I decided to make him my target for last year.

Before last season, I decided to introduce a food plot of Fusion onto my hunting area and got in contact with the Whitetail Institute. Not long after planting, I began seeing more deer using the plot and my hunting area. Even "Tuff" had showed up several times under the cover of darkness. Later that year, after consulting with Whitetail Institute, I added Winter-Greens to a portion of the food plot. In October, "Tuff" had remained a nighttime visitor and temptation got the best of me when a buck entered my plot from a neighboring property. It had become a legend himself at nearly 30 inches wide. I decided to take him (photo 1).

Early this year, I found one side of "Tuff's" sheds and became obsessed with providing him an area that he felt comfortable enough to become a daytime regular. Along with other areas of habitat design I had added cover to my plot with hinge cuts and a screen surrounding my Fusion, and in August, I added Ambush to the center portion of my plot. After reviewing my trail camera on the entrance, I had found success for a week in mid-August. "Tuff" had become a regular daylight visitor.

Anxiously awaiting Kentucky's Sept. 3 archery season opener, I decided to hunt opening day even with the temperature hovering the mid-90s. On my second hunt Sept. 7 all my hard work and effort paid off when "Tuff" emerged from the wood line on his way to my food plot and provided me with a 25-yard shot. After a well-placed bolt and 60 yards later, my goal had been achieved (photo 2). He scored 155-3/8 inches and is my best bow buck ever. I can't say enough about Whitetail Institute's products and the excellent customer service I received from this company. My loyalty has been assured with excellent seed quality and reliable customer service. 🦌



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, Pintala, AL 36043**

The Name Says it All:

IMPERIAL WHITETAIL EXTREME

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Perennial Performance.

Of all Imperial Whitetail forage products, none bears a more accurate name than Extreme. That's because it performs at the highest levels in attraction and protein content, and has the ability to thrive in optimum conditions and those that are less than perfect.

Attraction and Nutrition: Extreme is so attractive that it rivals the attractiveness of the No. 1 food plot planting in the world: Imperial Whitetail Clover. One reason is its main component, Persist Forb. Persist has a light, sweet taste similar to that of watermelon and cucumber, and it attracts deer like a magnet. Extreme's other perennial forage component, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory, is also exceptionally attractive, especially when compared to other chicory varieties. Unlike other chicories, WINA-100 chicory doesn't get stemmy as it matures, and its leaves don't get leathery and waxy the way other chicory varieties can. Extreme also includes specially selected annual

Whitetail Institute Pro Tips:

Imperial Whitetail Extreme, Establishment Phase

Imperial Whitetail Extreme rivals the attractiveness of Imperial Whitetail Clover, and it's among the most durable perennial forages you can plant for deer. As with any food-plot planting, though, Extreme has to establish — that is, achieve a good foothold in the plot soon after planting — to mature into a high-quality stand that offers multiple benefits for you and your deer.

The Whitetail Institute has spent decades educating folks that legumes such as Imperial Whitetail Clover need only a comparatively light application of nitrogen fertilizer at planting to establish. In fact, they might have done too good of a job, because some Whitetail Institute customers seem to miss the fact that the steps for making sure Extreme establishes correctly are different in an important respect: Extreme requires a lot more nitrogen fertilizer to establish than Imperial Whitetail Clover does.

Like Imperial Whitetail Clover, Extreme should be fertilized with a full-spectrum NPK fertilizer just before putting the seed out. The default (without a laboratory soil test) fertilizer recommendation for planting Imperial Whitetail Clover, 6-24-24, has a much smaller percentage of nitrogen than the default fertilizer for planting Extreme: 17-17-17. And unlike Imperial Whitetail Clover, Extreme should be fertilized again 30 to 45 days after it germinates with even more nitrogen fertilizer, such as 34-0-0. (Do not apply fertilizer when plants are damp.)

Why the difference? Because Imperial Whitetail Clover needs just a little nitrogen for the seedlings to get started. After that, they fix nitrogen in the soil naturally, so no additional nitrogen need be added. Extreme doesn't fix nitrogen, so nitrogen must be added in the form of fertilizer. And because nitrogen fertilizer doesn't last very long when exposed to the environment, more nitrogen


fertilizer should be added 30 to 45 days after germination.

It is crucial for Extreme's establishment that this second fertilization not be skipped. Keep in mind, though, that just as nitrogen fertilizer boosts forage growth, it also boosts the growth of competing weeds and grasses. Early grass competition (grass that appears in the plot soon after planting, when Extreme is still trying to establish) usually isn't a big issue when Extreme is planted in late summer or fall, because that's when most grasses are going dormant. You do need to monitor the plot the next spring for grass, and if grass shows up, you need to spray it as soon as possible.

When Extreme is planted in spring, though, chances of early grass competition are much higher. That's why it's especially important after planting Extreme in spring to continue to monitor the plot for early grass competition and control it with Arrest Max grass herbicide as soon as you see it.

Arrest Max controls most kinds of grass, and it can be sprayed on Extreme even when the forage plants are still very young. This and everything else you need to know about Arrest Max can be found on the herbicide label, which is packaged with Arrest Max and is also available on the Arrest Max page at whitetailinstitute.com.

There, you'll also find a link to a quick-reference sheet the Whitetail Institute has prepared to help you make sure you correctly mix the Arrest Max spray.

Keep in mind that this article doesn't cover all the steps in the planting and maintenance instructions for Extreme. Instead, the points I hope you'll take are: Extreme needs both fertilizations — at planting and 30 to 45 days after germination — to develop into the best possible stand, and doing so will also boost early grass competition that you need to be prepared to control. 



The attractiveness of Extreme rivals that of Imperial Whitetail Clover. It's also among the most durable perennial forages you can plant.

clovers to help ensure that your food plot can green up and start attracting deer as soon after planting as possible.

Extreme is also highly nutritious. With protein levels up to 44 percent, Extreme provides abundant protein necessary for improved rack

size, increased milk production in does, fawn growth and overall herd health.

Tolerance of sub-optimal conditions. Just like all Whitetail Institute forage products, Extreme performs best in rich, fertile soils with neutral soil pH (6.5 to 7.5) in areas that receive 30 inches or more rainfall per year. It's unique, though, in its ability to tolerate less-than-optimum conditions, such as lighter soils, slightly acidic soils and annual rainfall levels as low as 15 inches.

Extreme is an excellent option even in areas with poor soils, such as reclaimed strip mines, lighter soils and areas where the soil can't be tilled. Also, Extreme's ability to tolerate as little as 15 inches of annual rainfall and grow its roots as deep as three feet into the soil to find moisture obviously makes it highly drought tolerant.

Extreme can also tolerate soil pH as low as 5.4, a level of soil acidity at which many other high-quality forage plantings couldn't survive. Even so, Extreme performs the best in soils with neutral soil pH, so the better course of action, if possible, is to lime low-pH soils before planting. The closer you bring low-pH soils to neutral range, the better Extreme can grow.

Extreme is a high-quality, protein-rich food source that's exceptionally attractive to whitetails and provides crucial nutrition to deer throughout the year. And its ability to flourish in such a wide range of conditions make it one of the most versatile perennial forage products you'll find.

If you live where the climate and soil pH are perfect (and even if you don't), give Imperial Whitetail Extreme a try. You'll find it's one of the most attractive, durable and versatile perennial food plot plantings available. 🦌



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The Path of Least Resistance Leads to Success

Easy travel and succulent food help revive a favorite deer stand

By Fred Abbas

Photos by the Author



Greg Abbas with a beautiful buck that used the path we created.

Two years ago, my family and I noticed a dramatic drop in buck sightings at one of our most productive blinds. That wasn't the only problem. Three of my grandchildren hunt from stationary blinds mounted on 8-foot platforms, and it's not easy to relocate those.

The crossbow blind of Alyssa, my son Greg's daughter, was only 75 yards from the door of our cabin and had produced several big bucks the past few years. However, for no apparent reason, deer changed their travel patterns. Previously, they had come over a ridge from their bedding area and traveled the trail that crosses in front of Alyssa's blind for a shortcut to our Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot. Alarmingly, though, deer began following the top of the ridge another 100 yards farther before dropping down to cross over into the food plot.

Our first thought was to use obstructions to alter their travel route, but we soon learned that was unmanageable because of the unusual structure of the land. But after deer season, we had plenty of time to figure out a solution. When we visited the farm in March to frost-seed one of our clover fields, there was enough snow to reveal that the deer were still using the far run. It became apparent they had no intentions of switching back to their previous route without intervention.

Deer can be lazy at times and will almost always take the path of least resistance, such as a pre-mowed trail. We had been using that tactic for many years. We even mow trails leading to our tree stands and blinds for quiet entry. When the time came in late summer for our fall plantings, the deer trails were covered by three feet of brush

and weeds, and you could faintly see they were being used. We first used chainsaws to cut a path through fallen trees and removed every branch from the trail. Then we mowed a trail with a riding mower from the food plot to the base of the ridge in front of Alyssa's blind. We believe in spoiling our deer.

Although deer cannot reason as we know it, they know a shortcut when they see one.

We then turned our attention to our food plot to further entice deer with a variety of tender food sources at one location. We called on Steve Scott of the Whitetail Institute for his expertise, because part of our plan called for various fall plantings. Because we wanted two fall plantings in one food plot connected with our clover field, Steve recommended that we plant Whitetail Oats Plus and Imperial Whitetail Winter Peas Plus. We tilled a strip 25 yards wide and about 300 yards long through our clover field in an overlapping manner to benefit one of the other blinds, too. We soon discovered that our strategy worked to perfection. Deer started using the path of least resistance regularly to reach the tender shoots. Many times, we saw more than 30 deer in the food plot. The good old days were back.

Michigan's bow season starts Oct. 1. Greg and I would start to hunt, but we viewed it more as a scouting tool. Of course, if a big buck stepped out, we would take him, but we normally don't get serious until the pre-rut and rut. That's also when we begin the hunt for the grandchildren. Between school sports and activities and Alyssa's horse competitions, our grandchildren do not have a lot of free time, so we try to use their limited time productively. Each of our grandchildren had great opportunities at bucks, especially Alyssa. She is much more selective and more apt to pass on smaller bucks to wait for a bigger one. That's fine with Greg and me, because we're willing to pass on the smaller ones, too — even to the point of not shooting a deer during the season.

When the children returned home, our hunt began in earnest. Although we own or lease several farms in three southern Michigan

counties, with all having food plots, one farm seemed to be most promising, as evidenced by trail cameras and sightings. Greg decided to hunt Alyssa's blind because of the strong activity in that area. He shot a beautiful buck the first evening he hunted there when the deer nonchalantly walked down the mowed trail heading toward the food plot.

I spent a few days at another farm hunting a nocturnal buck to no avail. Soon after, I had to head home to drive my wife to the airport and babysit the "kids" — four dogs, three of which are rescue dogs, and one of which we rescued by the skin of her teeth. She was to be euthanized within 24 hours when I learned about her. She wanted to live. She's 11 years old now. As I moped around the house, a brilliant idea came to mind. Why don't I take them hunting?

I decided it was best to hunt Alyssa's blind because I could use binoculars to see the dogs sitting in the window of the cabin 75 yards away, waiting for me to come back. That way, I could make sure they were safe, especially since we use a wood-burning stove.

It was unbelievable the number of deer I saw cross in front of me, attracted like a magnet by that fantastic food plot. I lost count after 31 and even took a picture of a piebald doe that actually called my attention to a nice buck trying to sneak behind me. She brought me good luck.

The path of least resistance we created revived an old stand that is again being used extensively. 🦌



Author's note: Greg and I are inventors. We invent hunting products and hunting tactics. We also believe that there's a solution to every problem. For example, we think almost everyone gets an idea now and then. Unfortunately, most will dismiss that golden opportunity as being too expensive, only to see someone else profit from their idea. Greg solved that problem by starting a new business: Invention Consulting and Submission Service, because we were there every step of the way and fell through far too many cracks when we formed A-Way Hunting Products. You can contact us at Invention Consultants and Submission Service at www.Away-Hunting.com.

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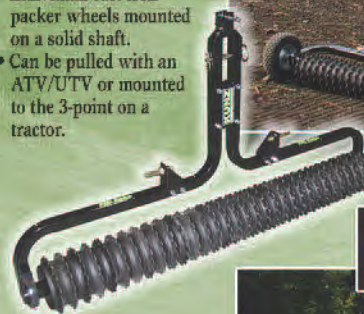
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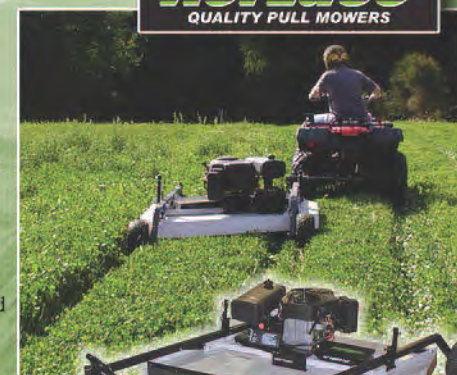
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The WEED DOCTOR

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

The Riddle of Understanding and Controlling Perennial Weeds

During a sarcastic tirade, a former supervisor once called me an obsolete dinosaur. I guess the dinosaur in me likes using information from ancient sources to help make a modern technical point. Referring to the early agriculturalist Jethro Tull from 18th century England, he makes an interesting comment regarding perennial weeds: *“The other old remedy is what often proves worse than the disease (sic.); that is, what they call weeding among the sown corn; for it by the hook or the hand they cut some sorts (as thistles) while they are young, they will sprout up again, like Hydras, with more heads than before; and if they are cut when full grown, after they have done almost their utmost in robbing the crop; ‘tis like shutting the stable door after the steed is stolen.”*

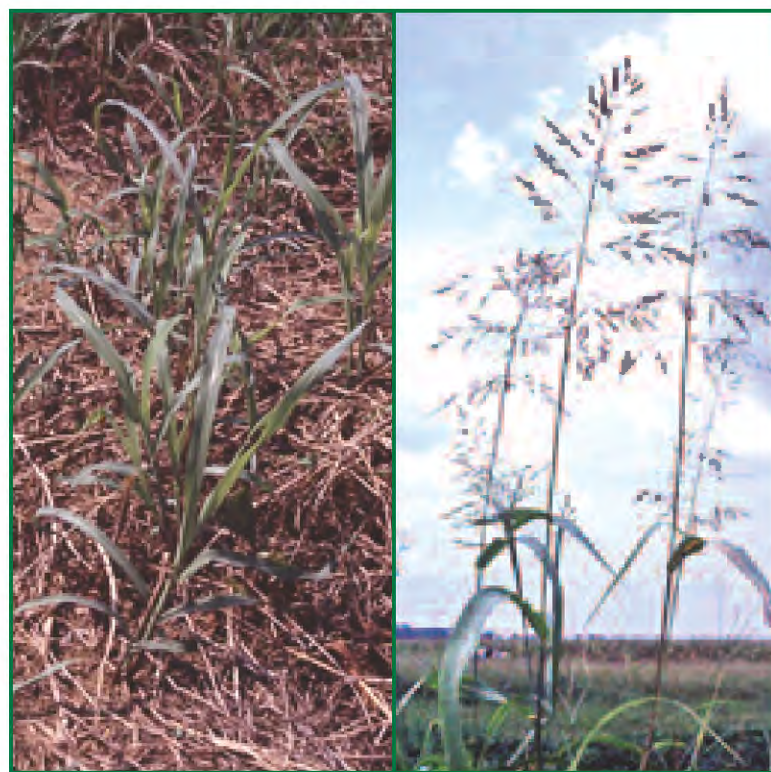
Jethro Tull is referring to perennial thistles growing in cereal grains (his term is ‘corn’), which are very difficult to control, even today. If you mow thistles when they first begin to produce a flowering stalk (called bolting), many other flowering stalks are stimulated making the problem even worse. That is the basis for the simile Tull makes to the mythological character Hydra. The point is that perennial weeds are very difficult to control and effective control is based on an understanding of how perennial weeds grow and propagate.

The basics of perennial weed growth. Perennial weeds propagate primarily by vegetative pieces of rootstock (rhizomes, stolons, tubers, and etc.) and secondarily by seed. The perennating rootstock are the main reason for perennial weeds being difficult to control. It is a well-established scientific fact that successful control of any perennial weed targets the perennating rootstock. However, do not forget about perennial weeds producing seed. The perennial grass johnsongrass produces resilient rhizomes for long-term survival in the field and copious amounts of viable seed, which can spread over significant distances.

Mechanical controls — a blessing and a curse. Mowing and tillage are mechanical weed control tools of immense value to food plot hobbyists. However, neither practice used alone will adequately control perennial weeds. Jethro Tull mentions thistles, but think about the perennial weed common bermudagrass. Improved selections of the same species are commonly planted worldwide on golf courses, athletic fields, and as a hay crop. The resilience of these selections, which makes them desirable for those uses, is why the species is also a troublesome weed. The aggressive lateral growth of the

stolons and persistence of the rootstock makes common bermudagrass a troublesome weed. Mowing may scalp above ground portions of common bermudagrass, but the roots are obviously not directly affected allowing recovery.

Tillage may be a little more effective than mowing in suppressing perennial weeds, but that difference is short-lived. It is logical to expect that tillage may spread perennial weeds by cutting and relocating perennial weed rootstock elsewhere. On the other hand, removing periodic tillage from the food plot production system (i.e. no-till) allows perennial weeds to quickly become problematic. That is why I am not a carte blanche proponent of true no-till crop production, including food plots. It is worth noting a sliding scale of effectiveness of mechanical control of perennial weeds. One shallow tillage will, at best,



Johnsongrass is a weed common across much of North America. Rhizomes help the species resist control measures and survive. Additionally, johnsongrass produces seeds that can persist for years in the soil and also spread over long distances. In temperate regions, johnsongrass is a persistent perennial. In far-Northern climates, johnsongrass rhizomes often do not survive the harsh winter and the weed behaves as an annual grass propagated solely by seed. Johnsongrass is readily controlled by Arrest Max.

do nothing for perennial weed control. If you are going to use tillage to suppress perennial weeds, then till with gusto. Repeated tillage during a fallow summer (no forage crop growing during the hot summer months), will progressively weaken perennial weed rootstock and perhaps expose those structures to desiccation causing mortality.

Chemical control of perennial weeds. Effective herbicides for perennial weed control must be systemic, meaning that the herbicide is actively transported from foliage to the perennating rootstock. Contact herbicides are non-systemic, do not affect the rootstock of perennial weeds, and are no more effective than mowing. Common systemic herbicides that can be directly applied to forage legumes for perennial weed control are Arrest Max and Slay. These two herbicides work best for perennial weed control when applied in the late-spring through early-summer. Other systemic herbicides that can be applied to fallow sites are triclopyr (Garlon), glyphosate (Roundup), and 2,4-D. Triclopyr and glyphosate tend to work better on perennial weeds when applied in the autumn when weeds are actively translocating to rootstock. Development of systemic herbicides were weed control milestones in conventional agriculture and food plots alike. However, these systemic herbicides are not fool-proof and not stand-alone.

Integrating mechanical and chemical weed control. Synergy can be defined as the final outcome from combined factors is greater than the sum of the individual factors. A classic example in agricultural science is the effect of integrating mechanical control (mowing, tillage) with systemic herbicides to control perennial weeds. This synergy must be captured for adequate control of any perennial weed species.

The synergy of mechanical and chemical weed control is based on two general concepts, both affected by nuances of the weed species. (1.) Mechanical controls (done correctly) weaken the survivability of perennial weed rootstock and that improves overall performance of systemic herbicides. (2.) Mowing alters the growth pattern of perennial weeds, specifically upright perennial weeds. Mowing stimulates regrowth and those leaves tend to transport systemic herbicides to the perennating rootstock. That is the case with perennial pepperweed (a pasture weed in the western U.S.) and tall ironweed (found in the U.S. heartland). A few years ago, Whitetail Institute received several inquiries on how to control the perennial grass, tall fescue, in food plots. A search of the agricultural scientific literature found the same general recommendations; use mowing, shallow tillage or fire to weaken the tall fescue stand and then treat succulent regrowth with glyphosate. These examples are the basis of our standard perennial weed control recommendations.

When it comes to perennial weed control in food plots, satisfactory results are neither simple nor immediate. Successful perennial weed control begins with some form of mechanical weed control to weaken perennial weeds and stimulate regrowth, followed by a systemic herbicide. Jethro Tull compared hoeing to control perennial thistles with the Greek mythological character Hydra, a multi-headed aquatic monster. If one head were severed, it was replaced by two. Hercules was tasked with killing Hydra. Hercules used his sword to sever a Hydra head and fire to cauterize the 'stump' to prevent regrowth and eventually killed Hydra — synergy. Perennial weed control is no different; a synergistic system of mechanical weed control and systemic herbicides. Just think, if Jethro Tull had a whiff of glyphosate or any systemic herbicide in the 18th century, the Hydra analogy in his essay would have a completely different meaning. 🦌

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IF YOU CAN DO IT IN THE NORTHEAST, YOU CAN DO IT ANYWHERE

Don't believe quality deer management concepts can work in your area? Consider the author's success in heavily hunted western New York.

By **Charles J. Alsheimer**

Photos by the Author

Before Europeans arrived in North America, natural predators and American Indians managed the whitetail population. By today's standards, American Indian harvest methods were unscientific. However, unlike early European settlers, who often looked at the dollar value of wildlife, American Indians viewed the whitetail and the rest of the natural world with reverence. They understood the balance of nature, and consequently, they harvested only what they needed.



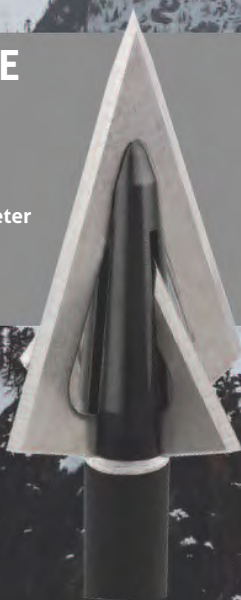


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Public events like the Steuben County Antler Roundup help promote the cause of letting deer mature and the necessity of good food plots



No one knows how many whitetails inhabited North America when Europeans arrived. Some estimate the deer population was as high as 40 million, though others claim it was less than the current population, which is estimated to be 25 to 35 million. Regardless, whitetails were a prominent part of the North American landscape and a valuable form of sustenance for American Indians.

Archeological digs reveal that American Indians killed whitetails in all age classes. Whether this was planned, they were essentially practicing a natural form of quality deer management long before the Pilgrims landed. However, when Europeans gained a commercial foothold, things changed rapidly.

After the Revolutionary War, Americans became adventurous. They settled eastern North America and began moving westward. As prime whitetail habitat was cleared for farming and industry, the deer population decreased significantly.

With open seasons, no bag limits and demand for venison in cities, market hunting became popular in many parts of the East by the 1800s. As a result, the deer population plummeted, and by the late 19th century, fewer than 500,000 whitetails remained in North America.

Back from the Brink

About 1900, a plea went out from conservation-minded sportsmen,

and game seasons were closed throughout the country. Because of the severity of mismanagement, it took decades for whitetails to recover.

By the time deer numbers returned to reasonable levels, the skill of deer hunting was nearly forgotten. This lack of knowledge made implementing a deer-management program difficult. However, a more structured style of management — known today as traditional deer management — gradually took hold.

Traditional deer management was used to rebuild America's white-tail herds after the market-hunting era. It's still practiced today, at least in part, by many state game departments. In a nutshell, traditional management lets hunters kill antlered bucks while protecting portions (in a few cases, all) of the antlerless population. For the most part, antlered bucks killed in traditional management programs are 1-1/2 years old. Currently, it's still not uncommon for 70 to 90 percent of the deer killed in Northeastern states to be yearlings.

One principal goal of traditional management is to provide a hunt-able resource while keeping deer population within the land's carrying capacity, with little concern for how many bucks are killed. Traditional management worked well in its early years, but it has created a few problems in the long run. Its biggest shortcomings include its tendency to overstress bucks and its inability to keep herds within the land's carry capacity.

Despite its weaknesses, traditional management became popular because most hunters wanted to see a lot of deer. It delivered in that

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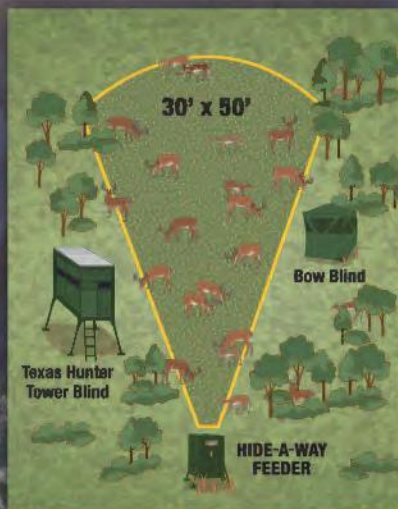
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area throughout the years. In tradition-rich deer hunting states such as New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont, high deer populations provided hunters with the sightings they wanted. Unfortunately, many hunters didn't realize that traditional deer management was a time bomb, because skyrocketing populations took a heavy toll on natural habitat. In many areas, this damage was irreversible, at least in the short term. Also, because of extensive buck harvests, sex ratios became heavily skewed in favor of does.

Winds of Change

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Texas wildlife biologists Al Brothers and Murphy Ray took a critical look at traditional management. Their concerns dealt with how traditional management protected does while embracing unregulated buck harvests. After several years of formulating a more effective approach to deer management, they published their findings in the book *Producing Quality Whitetails*, which put quality deer management concepts in print for the first time. The book was a huge success, and it challenged sportsmen to look closely at building a better deer herd.

Soon after the book's release, I purchased a copy. It introduced me to a concept known today as quality deer management, which the Quality Deer Management Association describes this way: "QDM is a management philosophy/practice that unites landowners, hunters and resource managers in a common goal of producing biologically and socially balanced deer herds within existing environmental, social and legal constraints.

"This approach typically involves the protection of young bucks combined with an adequate harvest of female deer to maintain a healthy population in balance with existing habitat conditions and landowner desires. This level of deer management involves the production of quality deer (bucks, does and fawns), quality habitat, quality hunting experiences and quality hunters."

Others were instrumental in spreading the concept Brothers and Ray introduced. In 1977, Texan John Wootters wrote *Hunting Trophy Deer*. Like *Producing Quality Whitetails*, Wootters' work quickly sold out and became a classic. These works set the groundwork for today's quality deer management movement.

In the 1980's, more folks saw the QDM vision. Ray Scott, founder of Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, caught the vision and launched Whitetail Institute of North America and this publication, *Whitetail News*. Scott recognized the relationship between antler growth and factors such as age, nutrition and herd dynamics, and was one of the first to encourage using food plots as a nutritional supplement.

In October 1988, thanks to the efforts of Joe Hamilton and many other people, the South Carolina Quality Deer Management Association was officially formed. From this group, the Quality Deer Management Association was formed in 1991.

Birth of a Dream

When the 1990s arrived, most deer hunters and landowners in the Northeast viewed the quality deer management movement as nothing more than a concept that could only work in Texas and a handful of Southern states, primarily because of the Northeast's hunting culture. For the most part, when it came to deer hunting, the decades-old philosophy in the Northeast was, "If it's brown, it's down." As entrenched as this mindset was, things were about to change.

In 1989, while in Texas to hunt and photograph, I had the pleasure of spending time with Brothers. During our time together, he explained the benefits of quality habitat, a quality deer herd and quality antlers. Needless to say, I received quite an education. On the plane trip home, my mind raced with what I had seen and heard. After returning to New York, Brothers called to ask my thoughts on what I had seen in Texas. It wasn't the last time I would hear from him.

After spending most of my life in western New York, the Texas approach to deer management was an eye-opener. Although I had dreamed for years of a time when quality-racked bucks would be common near my home, such thoughts seemed far-fetched. The predominant hunting philosophy at the time in the Northeast was to shoot any legal buck. Consequently, 1 ½-year-olds comprised more than 80 percent of New York's annual buck harvest.

During Winter 1989, I decided to see if Brother's idea could make a difference on our 200-acre farm. During the next four years, I pretty much went at it alone, planting food plots, not killing yearling bucks and increasing our doe harvest. During this time, I became aware of several local landowners who were doing the same thing, with all of us seeing positive results, although none of us had more than 250 acres.

In hopes of taking things to the next level, I contacted seven local landowners after Christmas 1993 to set up a meeting to test the QDM waters. In January 1994, we met in the Howard, New York, town library to kick around ideas about how our immediate area could have better deer. All but one was a serious deer hunter, and all were passionate about having better deer.

To see if there was interest in quality deer management, we scheduled an event for March 1994, giving it the title The Steuben County Antler Roundup. Not knowing what to expect, we presented our ideas to a packed auditorium of more than 600 hunters and landowners at Avoca Central School. The response was exciting. So, coming off the interest generated, the group elected officers and formed the Steuben County Quality Whitetail Group in Summer 1994. Little did we know the best was yet to come.

Keep in mind, there was no internet in 1994. Still, word spread fast about what a bunch of landowners were talking about and practicing in rural western New York. The Antler Roundup became a yearly event, with attendees coming from as far away as Ohio, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Vermont and various parts of Pennsylvania. From our event, we heard of QDM groups being formed in Pennsylvania, with most becoming Quality Deer Management chapters.

Why it's Working

It's safe to say that had the media not fueled the movement, it would have taken longer for interest in quality deer management to gain a foothold in the Northeast, because traditions die hard here. When you've lived all your life in an area where the deer hunting philosophy has been, "If it's brown it's down," you have serious reservations about any chance of having older bucks to hunt. So, the magazine you're holding deserves much of the credit for showing Northeastern hunters and landowners the way forward. Taking *Whitetail News'* lead, other magazines, such as *Deer and Deer Hunting*, began publishing article after article on the benefits of quality deer management and what it takes to have better soil, habitat, better quality deer and to have better deer hunting. One of the critical things stressed in those early writings was that total cooperation

among landowners is not necessary for success.


As one of the first to write about quality deer management, I relied heavily on what I came to call the checkerboard concept. Certainly, it's ideal to have a huge block of land managed solely for quality white-tails. However, that's wishful thinking in the Northeast, where small parcels of property are common. Not every landowner is interested in quality deer, so assembling a sizeable tract of land for QDM is next to impossible.

There will always be gaps in the QDM landscape, so our area (and many other Northeast locations) looks like a checkerboard on the map. Some properties subscribe to QDM, but others don't. For example, of the 10 landowners that border our farm, only three practice QDM. Despite that, antler quality and age structure have improved — just as Brothers said they would. The accompanying photo shows some of the bucks I've harvested on our farm since I implemented a management program. This photo is an example of what is taking place throughout the Northeast.



Encouraging Progress

It's encouraging to see how well QDM has worked on our farm. My only regret is that I didn't start sooner. When I think of the beautiful yearling bucks I killed early in my career, I wonder what might have been if they had matured. Others who've been involved with the Steuben County Quality Whitetail Group share this feeling.

Currently, more than 2,000 acres in my immediate area are managed for quality deer, and Steuben County has more than 30,000 acres. With each year, more interest is generated. The journey has been interesting yet sometimes slower than many would like. However, the crown jewel is that the program is working. And if QDM can work in the Northeast, it can work anywhere in North America. 



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Press 1 for...

Whitetail Institute's customer service pledge follows the Golden Rule — and gives customers common-sense advice on all food plot issues

By Scott Bestul

It's no secret that customer service is, if not extinct, surely on the endangered species list. It doesn't matter if you're ordering a burger or buying a bicycle. Getting a real person to answer a question about a product is like asking Hillary Clinton to ditch the pants suits.

And run into a problem after the sale? Well, you're more apt to feel as abandoned as Matt Damon in *The Martian* than you are to get some TLC. The last time I had a customer service problem, it took me five minutes to navigate the company's automated help menu. (You know: "Press 1 if you want to overpay your bill. Press

2 if you own a labradoodle. Press 3 if you're not a resident of Sumatra.") Then I spent 40 minutes waiting to speak to a live human, who, predictably, acted like he was doing me a favor regaling me in barely understandable English.

But customer service is not a thing of the past at Whitetail Institute. In fact, the company's help line is toll-free and has been an integral part of the company's business plan from the beginning.

"It may sound a little corny to some people," said vice president Steve Scott, "but I tell everyone we hire here, 'I want you to treat anyone who calls on that line like he is the most important person in your life during that call.' The Golden Rule is not dead here. It's an integral part of how we do business and, I believe, it's why we're as successful as we are. Whitetail Institute is recognized as both the pioneer and leader in the food plot category, and I think there are two reasons for that: We make a superior product, and we treat people — even if they're not a customer — like we would want to be treated if we were the one making the call."

Scott said the company's hotline has been in place since Day 1.

"Even when the only product we had was Imperial Whitetail Clover, we offered free advice," he said. "When we started, planting food plots specifically for deer was something brand new for most people, so many of the questions were pretty basic by today's standards."

And, Scott noted, some of the answers might not have been what the customer expected or even wanted to hear.

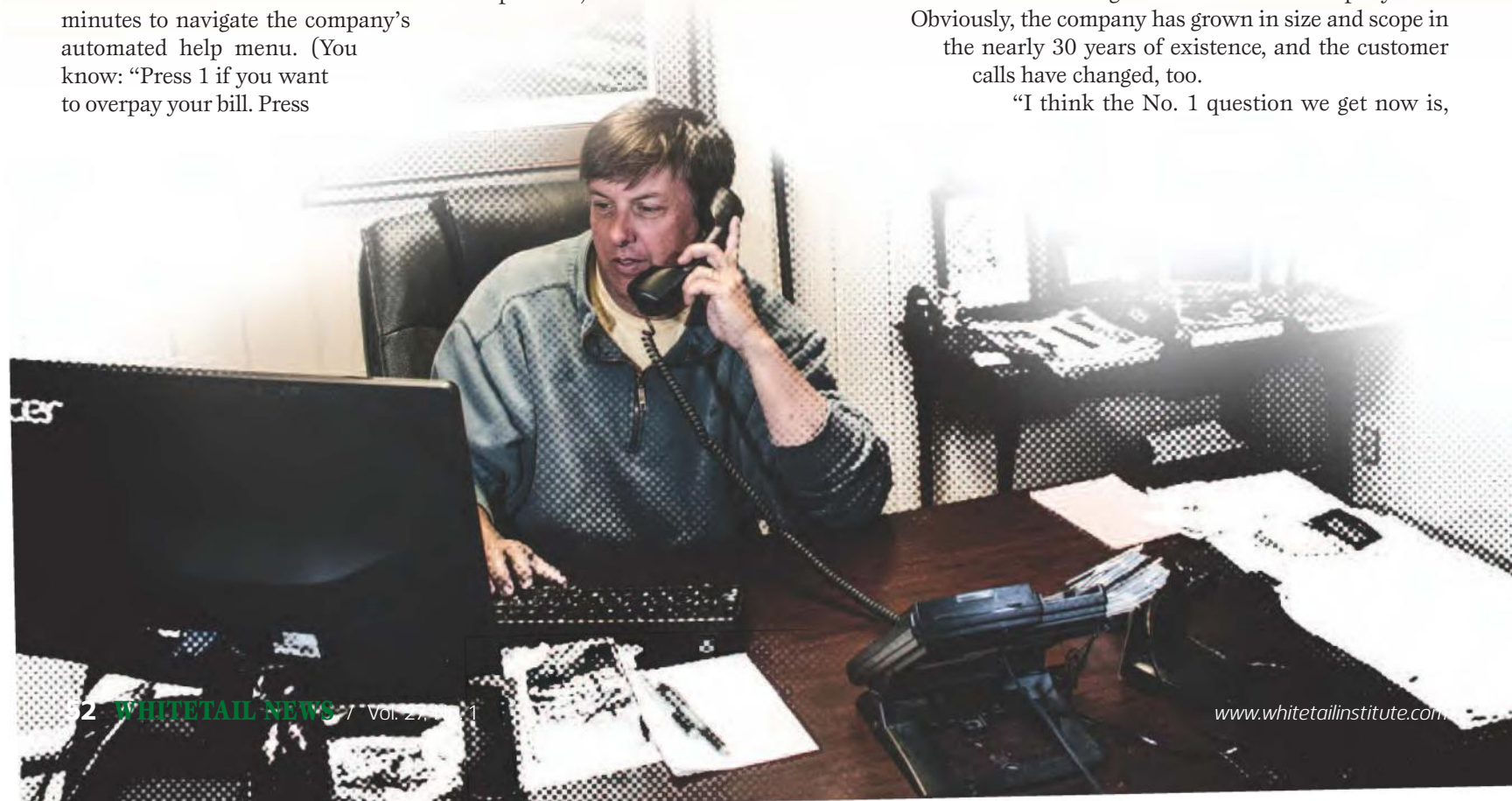
"We'd get a guy from Texas, for example, who wanted to buy a bag of our clover and plant it in June," he said. "And, our answer would be, 'No you don't,' because we knew planting clover in June in his area was almost certainly going to be a disaster. In situations like that, you risk walking away from an immediate sale, but you also hope that you gain a life-long customer through credibility and trust."

That honesty-first policy has paid off, Scott said.

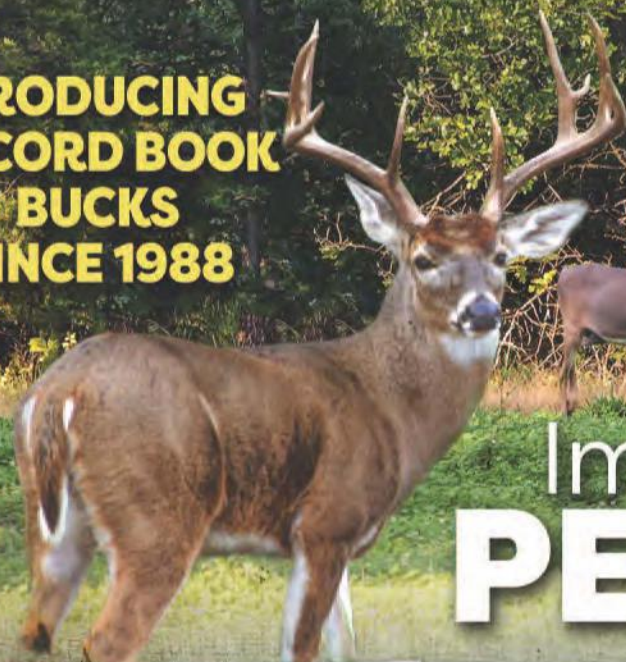
"In peak planting season, it's pretty much non-stop calls, and we have an all-hands-on-deck policy. Everyone in the office is prepared to handle a customer call including the owners of the company."

Obviously, the company has grown in size and scope in the nearly 30 years of existence, and the customer calls have changed, too.

"I think the No. 1 question we get now is,



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‘What do I plant?’” Scott said. “We’ve got a fairly big catalog that offers a lot more than Imperial Whitetail Clover. And while we offer planting charts that instruct people when to plant what, it’s still nice to ask questions with a live human being about what seed might work best in your area and then how to go about planting it correctly.

“Still, the one piece of advice I think we give out the most is, ‘Do a soil test. It’s simple. It’s cheap. And it’s the ultimate building block for a successful food plot.’ But sometimes, folks want to skip that most basic step, and it can be the difference between the best food plot you can imagine and total failure.”

There have, of course, been moments of humor, too.

“Oh yes, we all still chuckle about the guy who’d planted 30-06 mineral and wondered why nothing was coming up in the plot,” Scott said. “So yeah, like many of us, reading the instructions must have been a challenge for him. But I tend to minimize spreading that story, because I don’t want to discourage anyone from calling. I firmly believe that the only dumb question is the one you don’t ask. It’s a cliché to some, but not here.”

Still, Scott said the education curve on food plotting has improved dramatically.

“We definitely get some more educated and involved questions than we used to,” he said. “We can handle over 99 % of them right on the spot, but if not we have agronomists, scientists and dirt-under-their-nails technicians who can answer any question thrown at them usually before the end of the day.”

One of the experts a customer might chat with is William Cousins, a longtime Whitetail Institute employee and veteran of many customer help calls. The day I chatted with Cousins, he’d just tagged a

fantastic 150-class Alabama whitetail the day before — but all he wanted to talk about was food plotting.

“I like to deer hunt as much as the next guy, but to tell the truth, I’m more like that cook who rarely eats,” he said with a laugh. “I love the food plots. I’m a farmer at heart and in practice. I tend to get the overflow calls; the ones that go beyond seed types and choices. I get the guy who needs advice or help on his tractor or the right implements. Or, if there’s some tough weed problem that’s driving a guy crazy, I love helping with those.”

Like others on the help lines, Cousins will help with any food plot question, even if it doesn’t involve Whitetail Institute products.

“Heck, I’ve even steered them away from our stuff if they’re thinking of using it in a situation where I don’t believe it will work well,” he said. “Ultimately, I want them to be successful growing food plots, and we’ve proven time and again that if people can get solid advice from us, they’ll turn into customers eventually.”

Cousins’ farming background makes him uniquely qualified to help deer managers of all stripes.


“I even handle questions on row crops like beans and corn and how to grow them,” he said. “Weed control is a continual challenge, and as folks get more involved with food plots, they find themselves facing weeds and grass they’ve never encountered. You learn in a hurry that there are more weed seeds in a square yard of dirt than fleas on a dog. Fortunately, we’ve handled most of them. If I can’t answer a question immediately, I guarantee you I’ll be in contact with someone who knows and we will almost always have an answer to you by the end of the day.”

Cousins said he’s noticed a huge leap in the expertise of Whitetail Institute customers using the help line.

“Like most of us, they start with the simple goal of seeing and killing more deer, and they’re happy to just make green stuff grow. But as they see what a difference quality food plots can make as they manage — not just hunt — deer, they recognize that there’s a science behind all this. And like farmers, they just want to get better and more efficient at what they do.”

All of that sounded pretty cool, but I decided talking to employees about the wonders of the Whitetail Institute wasn’t quite good enough. So, not identifying who I was or asking for anyone specifically, I made a call to the help line. It was an honest problem, too; not something I made up as a test. I’d planted a quarter-acre plot in Fusion, a blend of clover and chicory. The plot had come up well, but the dirt there is notoriously fickle, so there were patches where the plants didn’t perform as well as I’d hoped. Because I’d used frost-seeding in the past to boost a clover plot, I wondered if the technique would work in that situation.

I not only got some solid, honest advice on how to frost seed (“Don’t overdo it; just hit the patches that look thin or bare”) but some direction on the best ways to make the plot truly shine: Take another soil test. Spread the appropriate amount of lime as early as possible. Then apply the fertilizer during two periods — early and late summer. That will give the plants a boost when they need it.

After I hung up, I was eager to get after that plot, which has always been solid but has never lived up to its potential. Even better, I didn’t listen to one second of sales pitch for this Whitetail Institute product or that. Instead, I believed I’d spent 10 minutes chatting with not only a knowledgeable expert but someone who wanted me to succeed. Which, I suppose, is exactly how Steve Scott would have wanted me to feel. 

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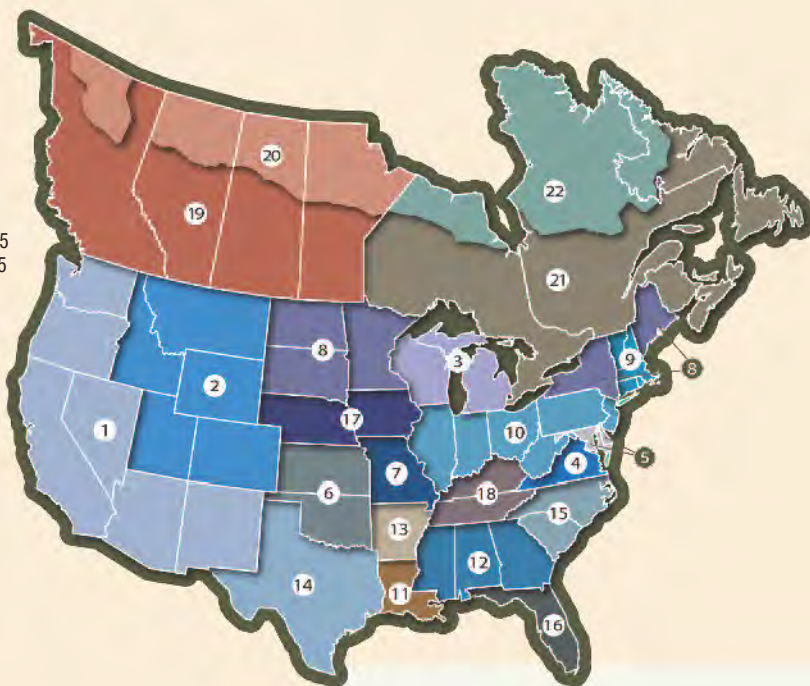
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Food Plot Planting Dates...

PLANTING DATES FOR IMPERIAL CLOVER, ALFA-RACK PLUS, EXTREME, NO-PLOW, CHICORY PLUS, 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 DOUBLE-CROSS, 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 | | |

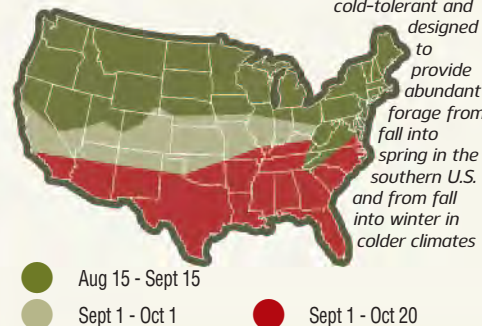
PLANTING DATES FOR WINTER-GREENS, TALL TINE TUBERS AND BEETS & GREENS

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------------|
| 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 | | |

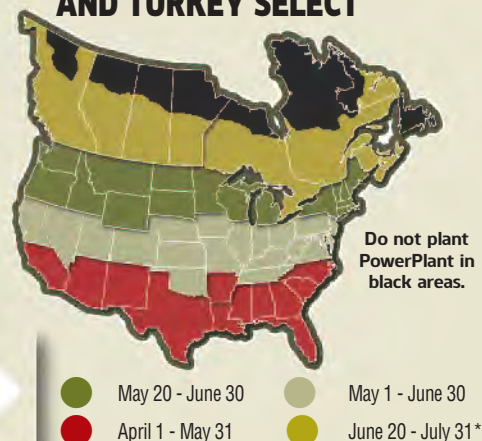
*Do not plant PowerPlant until soil temperatures reach a constant 65 degrees F. Wait as long as necessary for soil temperatures to reach a constant 65 degrees F before planting PowerPlant.

PLANTING DATES FOR 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 AND TURKEY SELECT



TOP TIPS.

*Decades of experience
add up to great advice*

By David Hart

Planting a food plot is as simple as turning some dirt and throwing down some seed, right? With some time and rainfall, you'll have a field of clover, oats or a blend of deer candy in no time.

It's not quite that simple, of course. In fact, turning a patch of ground into a lush, vibrant field of clover or brassicas can be a chal-

lenge. Don't fret. I asked four of Whitetail Institute's experienced product users to share their top tip for building a plot that deer — and you — will love.

Define the Mission

Before you buy a sack of seed and turn any dirt, and long before you send off a bag of soil for a test, figure out exactly why you are planting a food plot.

"Is this going to be a hunting plot or a summer nutritional plot?" said Neil Dougherty, North Country Whitetails operations manager. "A lot of guys just grab a bag of seed without really knowing what they are planting or why they are planting it. First, define your mission. What are you trying to accomplish?"

All food plots attract deer, to a degree. That's why we plant them. However, what you plant will have a specific result, often for a specific



Matt Harper has consistently harvested trophy deer. Photo by Matt Harper



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season. Some Whitetail Institute products are aimed at attracting deer in early fall, for example, giving you a prime bowhunting spot. Some perennials are designed to last virtually all year. Others are designed to provide high-quality nutrition throughout spring, summer and early fall, and a few are meant to provide late-winter forage.

“Decide what you want your food plot to do, and then buy your seed and build the plot,” Dougherty said.

Defining your mission also includes determining your ability to carry out that mission. Can you invest the time and resources into something such as an alfalfa or clover plot? Both perennials require routine maintenance. If you can’t do what’s necessary to keep those perennial plots maintained, perhaps it’s best to plant annuals, Dougherty said.

Whatever you settle on, there’s nothing more rewarding than when that mission falls into place and actually succeeds. In fact, Dougherty recalled the first time he watched a group of deer emerge from a wood line and step into the first food plot he planted 25 years ago. He would have been thrilled if those deer were does and fawns, but as luck would have it, Dougherty witnessed a group five bucks, including one that any hunter would be proud to tag.

“I was just hiding behind some bushes on a hot August evening when I saw those deer feeding in the food plot I built,” he said. “I thought, ‘I made this happen.’ It was a very satisfying experience. It still is.”

Be Realistic

Something as simple as seeing deer can be part of your food plot mission, but make sure you set achievable goals. Food plots require lots of work. They also demand time and money. In other words, know your boundaries along with the habitat’s limitations.

As a resident of southwestern Pennsylvania, Jeremy Flinn understands that he’ll never grow basketball-sized turnips, for example, no matter how much effort he puts into amending the soil. The thin, rocky soil where he lives just won’t produce that type of result. Further, because of the terrain, it’s all but impossible to use a tractor to plant larger plots, so he’s limited to an ATV and smaller plots.

“I can’t put in a big food plot like some guys can,” said Flinn. “I don’t even use a disk. All that will do is bring up more rocks from below the surface. All I do is use prescribed fire to burn off the existing

vegetation, and then I use a drag harrow to scratch up the surface of the soil.”

Accepting your limitations goes beyond the landscape. Building high-quality food plots from scratch not only requires some general knowledge of horticulture but also time, money and effort. If any of those vital resources are limited, you’ll need to have more realistic goals.

“A lot of guys want to plant as many acres as they possibly can, so they buy enough seed without allowing money for the other expenses, so they end up cutting costs at the wrong time,” Flinn said. “You need to plant only what you can afford to plant without cutting corners.”

That’s why he recommends scaling back your plot sizes if your resources are limited. There’s nothing wrong with going big, but make sure you can handle the demands necessary to grow a high-quality food plot.

As Flinn learned, it’s not so much the initial planting or even the soil-amending process. The biggest surprise he faced when he first started planting food plots was how difficult it is to control weeds in perennial plots. Although mowing can keep clover and other perennials vigorous, it really doesn’t always control weeds and grasses.

“I’m now a huge proponent of herbicides like Arrest Max for grasses and Slay for broadleaves in my clover plots,” he said. “Mowing won’t control perennial grasses, and it doesn’t prevent perennial broadleaf weeds from getting established, so I don’t mow to control weeds anymore. I spray.”

Test the Dirt

Weeds will grow almost everywhere because they’ve adapted to the soil for generations. Food plot plants, however, usually need a helping hand in the form of additional nutrients and a pH correction to reach their full potential. That’s why veteran land manager and deer expert Charles Alsheimer said nothing is more important in food plotting than proper soil preparation.

“If you don’t get the soil right, you may be wasting your money,” he said. “If the soil does not have the correct pH and the right nutrients for the specific plants you want to grow, those plants will not reach their full potential.”

In the most extreme cases, the deer may not even eat them. As Alsheimer said, the plants are nothing more than the delivery device for the nutrients in the soil. If the plants aren’t healthy, they won’t provide the maximum nutritional quality whitetails seek, so animals may try to find better food. Nor will the plants provide the tonnage of forage that a healthy plot can produce.

“It’s really pretty simple,” he said. “Amending the soil will result in healthy, attractive plants and a food plot that produces far more forage than an unhealthy food plot.”

You can choose from various soil tests, including do-it-yourself kits at home and garden centers. They are cheap and nearly immediate, but are they any good?

“They can give you an idea of your soil’s deficiencies, but they are in no way as accurate and reliable as a soil test conducted by a professional laboratory,” Alsheimer said. “If you are going to spend all that money on seed and gas and everything else, why wouldn’t you spend the 14 bucks on a professional soil test kit?”

He recommended the Whitetail Institute’s soil test kit.

“That will give you specific lime and fertilizer rates for a specific plant or product,” he said.

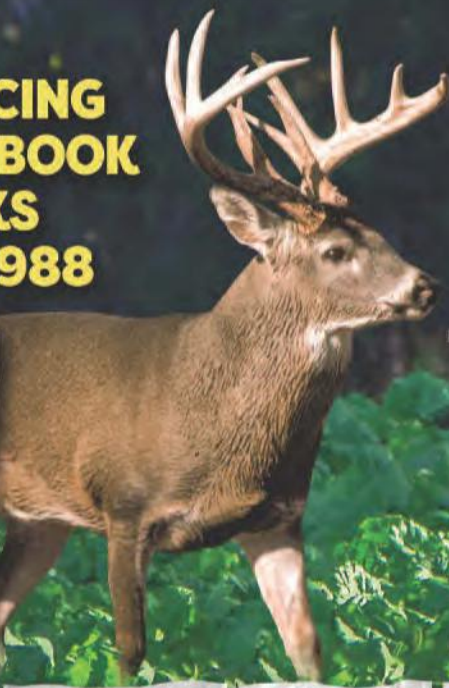


Author/hunter Jeremy Flinn displays one of his massive bucks.

Photo by Jeremy Flinn

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Don't wait until planting season, though. Not only is that the peak test season — everyone is sending in their kits at the same time — it won't give you enough time to properly amend the soil's pH. Lime can take time to fully affect the soil's pH. The farther in advance you can start amending the ground with lime, the better your plots will be.

As Alsheimer learned early, getting the soil right can mean the difference between a good deer season and a great one. However, he also learned that a healthy food plot in the wrong place can also make a huge difference.

"One of my first surprises came after I planted my first greenfield in 1974," he said. "I planted wheat right next to some woods that happened to be on my neighbor's property. As it turned out, I was feeding the deer, and they were shooting them. I realized that you need to get food plots away from neighbors. I didn't even think about that until after I planted that first one."

Since then, he puts as much thought into the food plot's location as he puts into what goes into the soil.

"Part of the fun of all this is laying out the food plots in relation to the rest of the landscape," he said. "That's a big part of your food plot's success, not just from a hunter's perspective, but from a manager's perspective, too."

Choose the Right Site

Food plot expert and frequent *Whitetail News* contributor Matt Harper agreed, which is why he said site selection is an equally important ingredient of the food plot equation. If you plant the wrong seed in the wrong location or choose the wrong place for a plot, you might be looking at a poor-performing food plot.


"It's critical to match the soil type to the plant before you put any seed down," said Harper, of southern Iowa. "Alfa-Rack Plus, for example, just won't do well in heavy, wet soil, and Imperial Whitetail Clover doesn't do as well on loose, well-drained soil."

Any seed will sprout and grow in the wrong soil type, but long-term success will depend on matching the soil to the plant. Alfalfa, for example, originated in the arid Middle East and has deep roots to cope with the dry ground typical of its place of origin. That's why hilltops, slopes and loose, thin soils are prime alfalfa spots. It fares poorly in damp, heavy soil, Harper said, but clover excels in heavy, damp soil typical of a creek or river bottom.

The site is just as important as the soil. All food plot plants excel with at least four hours of direct sunlight, which is why plots planted deep in the woods sometimes fail. They simply aren't getting enough light.

"Secret Spot, BowStand and No-Plow don't need quite as much light, but they do still need sunlight," Harper said. "Just make sure you inspect the site when the trees are fully leafed to get an idea of exactly how much sun is reaching the ground during the growing season."

You'll also be limiting your success if you plant a generic seed or one meant for cattle forage. Like many beginning food plotters, Harper thought seed sold to farmers was no different than products marketed to deer hunters when he planted his first Imperial Whitetail Clover plot 20 years ago.

"I remember watching deer walk through a field of alfalfa and brome to get to the Imperial Whitetail Clover I planted," he said. "There really is that much of a difference in the plants designed for deer and those designed for cattle forage. Deer aren't cattle." 

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Hunting Bad Guys and Hunting Deer:

One and the Same?

Part I

By Craig Dougherty

Bill hunts things for a living, and not deer, ducks or some other critter. He is a chief warrant officer three in a military special mission's unit; a guy who "conducts military targeting" for a living. Simply, he hunts "bad guys" — you know, the guys trying to kill us. He and his team of professionals are responsible for building the tactical intelligence picture for the finest fighting force in the world, including guys such as Chris Kyle of *American Sniper* fame. But he would just as soon hunt deer as hunt terrorists.

For security, I'm only allowed to use Bill's first name. We met via email this past summer when he reached out to talk deer hunting. Nothing new about that. Deer hunters reach out to me every day, but not from Afghanistan. Despite the time difference and a few thousand miles, we developed a friendship based on our mutual fascination with deer hunting. One day, we were discussing hunting the rut, scrape hunting or some other deer thing when he uttered something that got my attention: "Hunting deer and hunting bad guys have a lot in common. You find out where they sleep, where they eat and when they have sex, and you make your plan from there."

Wow. I knew I had to meet this guy. I've spent a 35-year career hanging out with the best deer minds on the planet, but this was something different; hunting terrorists and hunting deer. It was time to learn something new, with Bill doing most of the teaching. We agreed to hold a Special Forces deer summit when he returned to the states. My son, Neil, would help us fill in the deer blanks.

The Basics: Eating, Sleeping and Sex

Bill started with the basics. It seems terrorists are not that different from big bucks. When they are not making war, they typically hole up in remote locations. They move only when something forces them to move. Usually, they move when they want sex or need food, and that's when they are most vulnerable —when they leave their hiding spots and bedrooms.

Eating

Never underestimate the power of food. Bad guys run on their stomachs, and so do deer. Bad guys can't hole up forever, and food is often what brings them out. They go someplace to eat or bring in supplies. Bill and his guys know that and are always on the lookout for a hungry terrorist doing something stupid for food. One of Bill's favorite strategies is to control the movement of food into the secure areas inhabited by bad guys — starve 'em out of their holes, so to speak.

Ray Scott of the Whitetail Institute figured this out in 1988, when he discovered how food plots could change the rules of whitetail engagement. His Imperial Whitetail Clover has been the backbone of the food plot industry since. Show me a good deer hunting property and I'll show you a property with plenty of food plots. Deer use acorns, apples and all kinds of natural foods, but nothing beats a lush food plot. A good Imperial Whitetail Clover plot can produce tons of quality forage per acre each year. It helps bring 'em out of their holes. Nothing can even come close.

Sleeping

Bad guys, like deer, seek safety when they hole up. Their spider holes are typically off the beaten path somewhere in the mountains. In winter, they usually stay put until the passes clear. Like an old buck, when bedded, they are almost impossible to sneak up on, and they know how to sneak out the back door. They mostly move under the

cover of darkness and don't advertise their whereabouts.

They also set up their mountain holes so it's next to impossible to surprise them. They use the surrounding terrain to alert them to an approaching enemy. Sneaking up on a spider hole holding a nest of bad guys is not recommended in the terrorist-hunting business.

The same goes for killing a bedded whitetail. It takes a special hunter to kill a whitetail in its bed. We don't recommend it.

Most of a whitetail's day is spent in its bedroom. The key to finding where whitetails bed is finding where they can bed safely. They use every sense when they bed. Ever notice how deer will bed on the lee side of a ridge? That lets them see a good distance down the ridge while sampling the prevailing wind from behind and thermals from below. One sniff of danger and they are on their feet and over the ridge. The only thing left is an empty bed.

If no ridges are handy, they typically bed in the toughest cover they can find. Neil and I create bedding cover for deer so we can use it to our advantage. Knowing where they will lay up in a specific wind lets us be in the right place when they get up to feed.

We bulldoze brush and hinge-cut saplings to build bedding areas where we want them. We don't want them bedding over on Farmer Joe's place or anywhere else where they can get into trouble. If you control (or at least know) where they bed, you are halfway there. We set up the bedding areas so we can get to our stands without telling every deer in the area the hunt is on. If you can do that much, you're doing well. We don't want deer to hear us, smell us or even sense us in any way.


Sex

If you're going to kill a bad guy in bed, it will probably be with his sex partner. Just ask Bill. That's when the bad guy's guard is likely to be down. Bill was quick to dispel the myth that terrorists are a moral bunch and only have eyes for their spouses. Like a buck in the rut, the guys he hunts will attempt to breed any willing partners.

Ask any whitetail hunter when he wants to hunt, and most will say during the rut. That's when a buck's guard is likely to be down. Nothing makes a smart old buck do stupid things like a breedable doe. There are untold volumes written on hunting the rut, but it's interesting to see that bad guys and big bucks make mistakes for most of the same reasons.

Our favorite time to hunt the rut is just before the actual breeding, or the "hunter's rut." Does aren't quite ready, and bucks are all over the place, acting stupid. This happens just before the biological rut, when a doe has actually come into estrus and will let a buck breed her.

So, there you have it: eating, sleeping and sex. It's what makes the whitetail world go around (and apparently, some other worlds, too). If you know where and what a deer eats, where he sleeps and when he's in the mood for sex, you pretty much have him. Just ask Bill.

— Editor's note: "Part II: Beyond the Basics: What the Special Forces Can Teach Us About Hunting Deer" will appear in the next issue of *Whitetail News* (Volume 27, No. 2) 

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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.

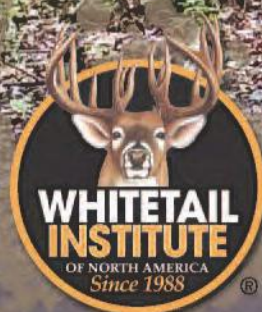
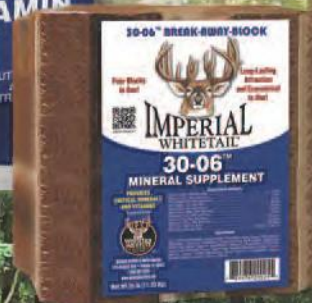
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REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

(Continued from page 25)

about Whitetail Institute products...



I bought a farm last year in late August. The place had some soybeans planted but the beans and the entire property was overgrown with weeds and was just a mess.

With no time to spare, I called my brother-in-law Roger in Iowa to come and help me figure out what to do to the place as I wanted to try and turn it into a buck sanctuary. My own trophy farm. He had done wonders with a farm he bought up there in a couple of years. Roger came down and we went to work. "We need some strategic food plots here, here, and here," he said. With no hesitation, he recommended we start with Whitetail Institute Winter-Greens and some Tall Tine Tubers. "We will want to plant some Imperial Whitetail Cover as well," he said. After a short discussion, I wasn't about to argue with success. The second week of September, I had two tractors there with bush hogs and a tiller, and we started to work.

On the opening day of rifle season, my dad shot a big 9-point off a Winter-Greens plot that I had trail camera photos of. Unfortunately, we couldn't find him.

It was a few days after Christmas, and the muzzleloader season was open. I headed to the farm to set on the beans I left standing, hoping to catch one of these big guys feeding before dark. I had a few deer come to the beans but no bucks. The next evening, I thought I would sit at one of my Winter-Greens food plots to see if the deer were still using them. As I walked to the food plot I noticed that the deer had been pounding the plot. I climbed into my stand and settled in. Within 30 minutes I had two does and two bucks come into the far end of the food plot. It was like a magnet to them. Before long, there were five bucks in the food plot and one really good heavy 8 pointer. I watched him for a while trying to see if I knew which deer this was. He looked old enough but would only score in the upper 130s. I had never seen this buck before. It was still early in the evening, so I decided to wait and see what else might show up. All the bucks were pouring into the far end of the food plot. Now there were eight of them. I was so focused on them I didn't even see the buck standing right in front of me. Where did he come from? That's the big nine pointer. I slowly pulled up and waited for him to clear one tree branch. He was so engrossed on eating the Winter-Greens that he never heard me pull the hammer back on the muzzleloader. When the smoke cleared, I saw him pile up in the creek just 80 yards away. My trophy was on the ground, and I can share a great story with my dad of a buck we both shot in the same year. Dad's bullet had gone in under the shoulder blade and came out the neck on the same side never touching any vitals or breaking any bones. The 9-pointer scored 159 inches.

The bucks preferred the Winter-Greens over the soybeans I left. You can bet that from now on, I will be planting the Winter-Greens and Tall Tine Tubers food plots every year. Thanks, Whitetail Institute.

Chris Higgins - Missouri

We have used No-Plow for years with great results. The deer will walk over other fall seed combinations to eat No-Plow. Our soil is not the best, but after we got our pH correct, the No-Plow was even better. If you follow the directions given by the Whitetail Institute, you will have great results. I have turned three people on to No-Plow, and they love it as well. If you don't have room for large plots, don't worry, this buck was killed on a plot 20 feet wide and 150 feet long. Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for a great product.

Matthew Warner - Florida

KW



Send Us Your Photos!

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

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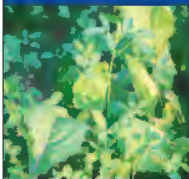


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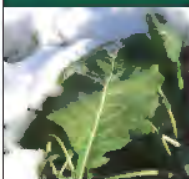


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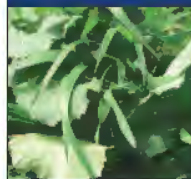


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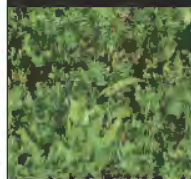


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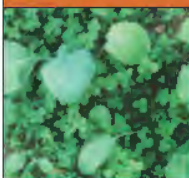


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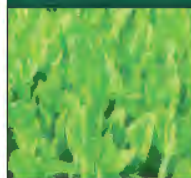


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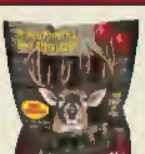
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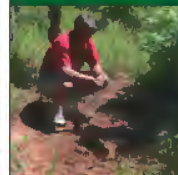
Please send _____ ☐ 1 Block @ \$24.95

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$_____

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



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Coupon Price: \$34.96 or \$19.95

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

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

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TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$_____

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* Important: Shipping & Payment Information

* Please Include Daytime Phone Number For UPS Shipments
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The future of our sport!

Harold Wolf – Michigan

My 8-year-old granddaughter, Elle Pompey, shot her first deer last year in Michigan during the youth hunt. Pictured with her are her cousins, Kyle Birk who is 10 years old, with his second deer, and 15-year-old Gabe Birk with his third buck. Thanks to Whitetail Institute's Extreme, we can plant food plots in Mecosta, Michigan sandy soils, and it helps us keep deer on our property. Thanks, Whitetail Institute, for great products. Proud grandpa!



Jamie Hoene – Illinois



1

I have been using Whitetail Institute seed for several years now. I have been very satisfied with the amount of deer using my plots. Enclosed are two pictures of my sons' first bucks. Picture 1 is of my son Carter Hoene, age 9, with his very first deer a nice 8-point. The deer came out and fed on soybeans with Pure Attraction sowed in when beans started to ripen.

Picture 2 is of son Caden Hoene, age 12, with his first buck. The body size of this deer was huge, and it weighed 217

pounds field dressed, it also was killed while feeding on soybeans and Pure Attraction. Both deer were taken during last year's Illinois youth gun season. Not bad for their first bucks.

Thanks for the great selection of products and you can bet my sons and I will be planting Whitetail Institute seed every year. Their bright smiles on their faces are priceless. It made my year a success already. Thanks again.



2

Katie Bales – Georgia

It brings me the utmost pleasure to write you this letter today. My name is Katie Bales, and I am 26 years old. My father, Robert Bales, has been one of the Whitetail Institute's most loyal customers for almost 20 years. My father is without a doubt the hardest working person I have ever known. He has made a living as an auto mechanic,



owning and managing his own shop, some weeks working every day. He also spends a lot of quality time with our growing family, setting up decoys in the backyard to teach his granddaughters how to shoot a bow and arrow. Somehow, every year he still manages to spend countless hours throughout the year working on the 886-acre hunting property. It is because of the countless hours that he spends working on the hunting property, deer season is always successful for him and all of the members of the hunting club.

One of my father's coined sayings is, when life gets tough "anything worth having is worth working for," which I have applied to every aspect of my life, especially

deer hunting. Deer hunting is not for the faint-of-heart. It's early mornings, long days and a ton of hard work in between. But it is most definitely worth every moment. This past deer hunting season, I was determined to get my first deer.

Finally, my big moment came this past season. I got my first doe! I will forever cherish these moments, spending quality time with my dad out in the woods. I cannot thank Whitetail Institute enough for everything they do to not only make the sport of hunting successful for their customers but also providing a means for tradition and values that is instilled within the sport of deer hunting.

Currently, I am a doctoral candidate pursuing a Ph.D. in vision science. I can say without a doubt, that the lessons I have learned while hunting can absolutely be applied everywhere else in life. So the saying reigns true, "anything worth having is worth working for."

Steve Moak – Missouri

We have used Whitetail Institute products since they were introduced. First in upstate New York, then for the past 20 years in central Missouri. The past eight years have been the most special because my sons Jacob and Daniel have helped me with every step of the planting process. I feel it is very important that children not only be introduced to hunting and fishing, but to the whole process of planting food plots. From taking soil samples, to turning the dirt, liming, seeding, fertilizing and mowing, they have been involved every step of the way. We have a relatively small property, so most of the tasks are performed by hand, and the boys truly understand sweat-equity.

We are fortunate that the property lies along a creek bottom, so the soil is perfect for Imperial Whitetail Clover. Recently, when replanting in the fall, we have used Whitetail Oats Plus, as recommended by the helpful staff at the Whitetail Institute. This provides a cover crop for the clover to get established and draws the deer during the fall season. Our plots form a figure-eight, with a bottleneck of timber joining them. This is where we set up a stand last season for my 10 year old son Daniel's first hunt. The following is the hunt in his own words, which was written for a school project.

Daniel Moak – Missouri

Beep, beep, beep I slammed my hand on the alarm clock full of excitement and got out of bed. My room was pitch-black and the only light was coming from my digital clock. I got dressed and crept downstairs and woke up my dad and I told him, "Dad I know today's the day. I know it. I can feel it." After that I went back upstairs and got my camo clothes. Then we went to the basement to put on our neon orange vests.

I grabbed the bullets and loaded my gun. I started thinking of the bullets that they were supposed to be able to kill a cape buffalo in one hit. I didn't believe it, so I slung the gun over my back and put my camo hat on. I had been waiting for this moment since I could remember. I couldn't wait. My dad asked me, "Are you ready?"


Then I said "Yes, yes I am!" and we walked outside. We had a confident look on our faces.

A cold breeze hit my face and it smelled like fresh walnuts and acorns. It was a chilly morning, but I didn't care. My dad and I slowly crept down to the blind. The blind looked like a big dark tree with windows. He had surprised me one afternoon with it. At least it would be a little warmer in there. I felt like an army combat sniper sneaking through the shadows to find the enemy, or in my case just to get to the blind. I decided to have some fun and pretend to snipe at some random things I saw. We reached the blind and my dad said, "Climb up and unlock the door." He had an encouraging tone in his voice. I got up there and opened the door and sat down. Then, my dad climbed up and sat down too. He handed me a cool blue gatorade, my favorite drink. I drank it and felt refreshed.

Next, we got situated. Then, we set up the gun and it was just a waiting game. I remembered my friend Dalton would come at 10:00 a.m. It was only 5:30 a.m., so we had some time. We sat there for an hour and then, out of the blue, I saw a big buck we had never seen before. He walked out and he was a 10-pointer and definitely the deer I wanted to shoot. I wasn't going to pass him up. My heart pounded with excitement. I put the crosshairs on his body and started thinking about earlier when I was sniping at things. I started counting down in my head 3, 2, 1, and I pulled the trigger with determination. The sound was like barrels and barrels of gunpowder. It was an explosion that echoed through the valley and through the forest. As the smoke cleared, I climbed down the ladder and ran as fast as my legs would carry me down the hill to where I had shot at the deer.

All I found was a pile of white fur that looked like pure fluffy white snow in the morning sun. I turned around and ran out of the woods thinking that the bullets were supposed to be able to kill a cape buffalo instantly in one simple shot — even though they didn't kill a deer. So I ran over to the valley with my heart still on the pile of fur. Suddenly, I stopped dead in my tracks. I saw the rack of horns that belonged to my deer. He was laying in the clover food plot that glistened like stars in the morning dew.

I swung the gun over my shoulder and ran as fast as I could to where he was. I put the gun on his stomach, threw my gloves off my shaking hands and put my hands on his shiny horns. I was so happy and knew I would never forget that moment. I wouldn't trade the entire galaxy for that moment. My dad caught up to me and I never forgot the words he said, "Good job son, a 10-point buck for a 10 year old boy." Although I was being hysterical, my dad had to run to the house and grab my tag. So he told me, "Ok, I'm going to run up to house and get the tag. You go under that cedar tree over there (he pointed to a tree that was completely hidden) and hide."

I ran over and hid. I waited and waited for my dad to return. Suddenly, I saw movement at the top of the hill. The face looked familiar, and it came to me that it was my friend, Dalton, who had changed into a pair of my camo clothes. Behind him were my dad, mom and brother. They were all coming to congratulate me. I jumped out of my hiding place and ran to my deer. Everyone got there within seconds. I was devoured by all the happiness in the world. 



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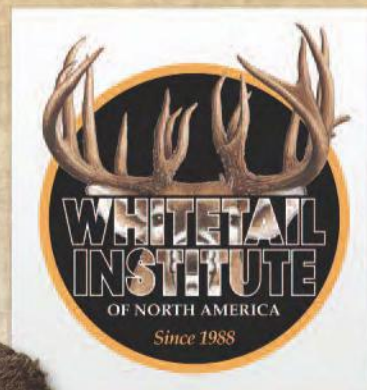
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