

WHITETAIL News

Volume 28, No. 2
\$8.95

William Cousins' **AWESOME** Bama Buck

Story On Page 5



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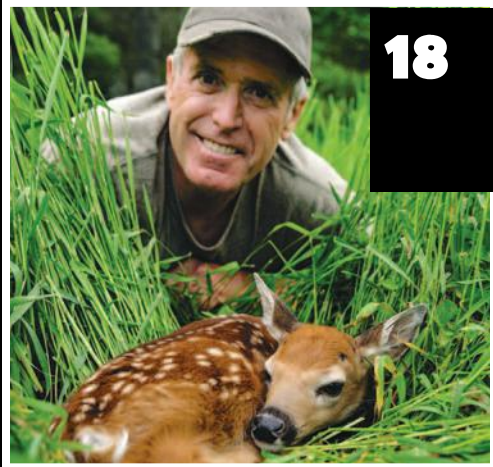
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18

In This Issue...

5 William Cousins' Awesome Bama Buck (and Other Fruits of His Care and Effort)

By Jon Cooner

William Cousins proves that hard work pays off and provides a testament that his approach leaves the world better than he found it.

10 Sanctuaries: The Key to Holding Mature Bucks

By Gerald Almy

Why you need them, and how to create and manage them.

13 Imperial Whitetail Vision

Newest Perennial Food Plot Blend Includes Imperial Whitetail Clover, WINA-100 Chicory and WINA-210 Kale

14 Four Secrets for Hunting Food Plots

By Scott Bestul

Many deer managers quickly learn, there's a huge difference between planting great deer food and consistently killing mature bucks over those plantings. Pulling that off regularly is a matter of careful preparation, a smart game plan and strict discipline.

18 Charlie Alsheimer: the Man, the Legacy

By Neil and Craig Dougherty

Charlie brought deer and deer hunting to life. He made it real because Charlie Alsheimer was real, a real-deal kinda guy.

22 Imperial Whitetail Pure Attraction

Designed for maximum attraction during the entire hunting season.

24 Tipping the Scales in Your Favor

By Bob Humphrey

Every hunter and landowner-conservationist want the scales to tip in their favor one way or another, whether it be on the game pole or in terms of the quantity and quality of deer on the land they hunt.

28 Help Your Deer Thrive During Fall and Winter

New 30-06 Thrive nutritional supplement provides vital nutrition and attraction during fall and winter

30 The Challenge of Food Plots in Big Timber

By Scott Bestul

Site selection is a critical step in the big-woods food plotter's plan.

36 Late-Season Hunting Over Winter-Greens Presents Challenges – and Big Rewards

By Matt Harper

44 Whitetail Oats Plus

By William Cousins

Is This the Most Versatile Whitetail Institute Annual Ever?

48 When Your Neighbor Plants Corn: What's the Fuss About?

By Craig Dougherty

50 A Deer Camp Revival

By Mark Kenyon

55 Food Plot Fallacies, Misunderstandings... and Solutions

By Tracy Breen

In some cases, hunters err when planting. In other cases, folks receive inaccurate information from friends or other "experts."

58 Why We Hunt

By R.G. Bernier

There is a charm about hunting that cannot be equaled by most other sports that keeps us coming back day after day, week after week, and season after season.

62 Nutrition Drives Deer Activity Trends on Northern Ranges

By John J. Ozoga

A Michigan study illustrates the link between forage and the daily and seasonal rhythms of whitetails.

65 Imperial Whitetail Winter-Greens

By Whitetail Institute Staff

A Revolution and its Evolution

Departments

4 Message from Ray Scott

26 Customers do the Talking

Stories and Photos

34 The Weed Doctor

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

42 Record Book Bucks

Stories and Photos

57 Food Plot Planting Dates

68 First Deer – The Future of Our Sport



58



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A Message from **RAY SCOTT** Founder and President of the Whitetail Institute of North America

Charles Alsheimer was a mentor to us all and left a lasting legacy for us all. Perhaps his greatest legacy is a gentle reminder to live in the way we want to be remembered.

The Long Reach of Legacies

Tributes continue to pour in about Charles Alsheimer, one of the great advocates of our sport in its truest and broadest sense — well beyond pulling a trigger or releasing a bow.

I was tempted to use the word apostle in place of advocate because it is an appropriate word for Charlie. He was a devoted Christian and had enormous reverence not just for the whitetail but all of God's natural world. Best of all he loved to share his knowledge and to preach the gospel of stewardship to all who would listen.

Ironically I was on the road shortly after Charlie's passing and by pure chance tuned into a local outdoor show. I rarely turn on the radio but lo and behold there was a promotion for Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), one of the show's sponsors. Now QDM was Charlie's passion and I felt like my friend was talking to me over the airwaves! It was beautifully coincidental because few people, if any, were more devoted to QDM than Charlie.

It reminded me once again how very connected we all were with Charlie at the Whitetail Institute and how much we learned from him. What a strong ally he was in those early years in our own quest to promote better whitetail herds and better hunting through quality nutrition and

proper management and conservation practices. Sometimes it was a hard sell in an era of salt licks and "if it's brown, it's down."

As pioneers of quality nutrition products for whitetail, we were trodding on unexplored territory and Charlie was an invaluable travel companion. We were always joined in mutual goals and philosophies and that makes me incredibly proud and grateful today.

Charlie touched on so many lives and thankfully his powerful legacy will live on. His passing reminds us that we are all capable of leaving a positive legacy. That alone is a great gift and an empowering thought: giving back, embracing a good cause, acting as a mentor especially. Like taking a kid fishing or hunting or just on a walk in the woods. Charlie took multiple generations of men and women and kids to the Great Outdoors and left a lasting impact.

Yes, Charles Alsheimer was a mentor to us all and left a lasting legacy for us all. Perhaps his greatest legacy is a gentle reminder to live in the way we want to be remembered.

Ray Scott

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William Cousins' **AWESOME** Bama Buck

(and Other Fruits of His Care and Effort)

By Jon Cooner

It was one of those text messages we love to get during hunting season: a friend sending a photo of a great buck he'd just taken. This one was special, not only because I received it from my good friend and co-worker William Cousins, but also because it proved that hard work pays off and provided a testament to Cousins' approach to leaving the world better than he found it.

Cousins connected with the 150-class buck in February while hunting his 300-acre Alabama farm. That's remarkable when you consider the county in which the farm is located isn't considered an area that regularly produces trophy whitetails. It's more impressive because he killed the buck in a Whitetail Oats Plus food plot after one of the worst droughts on record. The reasons for his success become apparent when you consider everything he's done to produce and harvest deer of such high quality.





Cousins' farm has been recognized as an Alabama Treasure Forest.

Building a Wildlife Paradise from Scratch

The Cousins farm was recognized as an Alabama Treasure Forest a few years ago. It's one of those places you visit for the first time and immediately think, "Wow. Somebody really cares about this place." Today, it's a showplace for what dedicated effort can accomplish, but it didn't start that way.

"I took over the farm when my father died in 1987," Cousins said. "I was determined to develop it into the best whitetail and turkey habitat I could, but at first, that had to take a back seat to just saving the property. The farm had a lot of debt on it when my father died. It wasn't totally under water, but the debt was substantial enough that the only way I could save it was to cut some timber and sell off some acreage."

After Cousins had paid the debt, he turned his attention to improving it as wildlife habitat. His initial efforts were difficult because of the condition of the land and his outdated equipment.

"My father had used the farm strictly as a dairy operation, so as far as developing the land itself goes, I started with a clean slate," he said. "It was mostly just overgrown fence rows and pasture land, much of which had gone fallow. The soil nutrient bank was depleted. The good news was that the farm has good water. There's a big pond and two natural springs, and it's river-bottom ground, so it had good mast-producing trees, such as red oaks, white oaks, water oaks and swamp chestnuts.

"It was tough clearing and working the soil in those days. One reason is that the areas where I wanted to put food plots were so overgrown. Another is that our equipment was pretty much worn out. I remember eating dust and being stung by wasps and fire ants many times as I tried to work the ground, and I spent as much time fixing equipment in those days as I did working on the land. It was hard work, but I look back on it now as a blessing. Now I'm 52 years old, and thankfully, I don't have to go through much of that any more. I

finally got to the point that I was eventually able to start upgrading to newer equipment, but I've never forgotten what I learned at the school of hard knocks: Equipment maintenance is extremely important."

It wasn't long before Cousins' efforts to build his farm into an award-winning wildlife habitat began to produce visible results.

"I started by building a long-term plan for the pastures and other areas of the property that didn't have hardwoods," he said. "Over the next few years, I machine-planted pine trees on about 80 percent of the open property and dedicated the rest of the fallow areas to food plots."

The Drought

One of the fundamental aspects of improving deer quality is making sure deer have access to nutritious food the entire year. That year, though, doing so became problematic, as Alabama was gripped in one of the worst droughts on record.

"Mother Nature turned off the water in late summer, and by October, it was time to either plant or give up on planting food plots that fall," Cousins said.

Cousins' knowledge and experience in developing and using Whitetail Institute products prompted him to plant — and plant more Whitetail Oats Plus than he does most years.

"I don't remember the exact numbers, but we really had no measurable rainfall from when I planted in October until about the beginning of December," he said. "The Whitetail Oats Plus laid in the dry seedbed for over a month. When rain finally came, the Whitetail Oats Plus grew extremely quickly, providing deer with a much-needed food source."

Cousins and Whitetail Institute

Cousins was the first employee Ray Scott hired at the Whitetail In-

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stitute, and he has worn many hats since then. For many years, he has served as the Whitetail Institute's operations manager and director of research and development. With his broad knowledge of farming and the seed industry, Cousins is well-suited for the job with the many years he has spent working closely with agronomists, ruminant nutritionists and other scientists, and Whitetail Institute certified research stations in developing and improving Whitetail Institute products. He also credits his Whitetail Institute contacts as a major source of his continuing education.

"I was blessed to have some farming knowledge when I came to Whitetail Institute, and I have learned so much more from the experts at Whitetail Institute, the agronomists and other scientists our company deals with, and our customers," he said. "I've been able to apply that knowledge over the years to continually improve my efforts on my farm and also Whitetail Institute products."

The Other Fruits of Care and Effort

Located deep within the 300-acre property, the Cousins farmhouse is a simple but gracious cabin that's accessed by a dirt road that meanders through stands of pines Cousins has planted through the years. To the west of the cabin is a lake stocked with bream and bass, and then food plots scattered along the back edge of the property, which abuts a river. From the deck of the farmhouse, you can see deer feeding at all hours in a food plot Cousins cleared and planted below it.

"My wife doesn't hunt," Cousins said, "but we put a food plot and a feeder just below the farmhouse where we can sit on the deck and watch deer and turkeys in the afternoon. My wife and daughter enjoy that. Those deer are for lookin', not for shootin'."

Cousins' efforts have paid off in improved habitat for a wide range of wildlife beyond whitetails.

"I've always primarily focused on managing the farm as a habitat for deer, but all wildlife has blossomed — turkeys, rabbits, squirrels and especially songbirds. My wife really loves that part of it."

Maintaining the habitat he developed on his family farm still takes up a lot of Cousins' time. In fact, you'll usually find him on a tractor when he's not in his office at the Whitetail Institute. These days, though, he enjoys working on his farm a lot more than he did in the early days, and the special joy that comes from sharing something he holds dear with family and friends.

"Back then, I had to work hard at the farm — at first just to save it, and then to improve it," he said. "Now, I don't hunt near as often as I used to. You could say I'm a cook that doesn't eat. I still work hard there, and it's equally rewarding but in a different way. Now, I get the

greatest pleasure from planting and maintaining food plots, continuing to develop other aspects of the habitat and seeing the wildlife flourish."

Beyond the improvements in the farm's wildlife habitat Cousins has achieved, it's easy to recognize the time he spends there with his family and friends means the most to him. Cousins still loves to fish in the pond with his son, wife and daughter. Of his wife, Ashley, Cousins admits, "She is the best fisherman in the family."

Most of the memorable moments Cousins recounts on the farm, though, include his son.

"When my son was young, he was dead on the rifle range, but he couldn't hit a deer," he said. "Buck fever and youth can be a bad combination. After he missed the fourth buck in a row, he wanted to quit. The next year, though, I told him, 'We are going to get plenty of ammo and keep shooting at the range so that you'll get as comfortable as you can.' We did exactly that. I remember helping him learn to hold the rifle steady. It's not like that now. When I hear his rifle go off, I know there's a deer on the ground."

"Father/son time is so precious, and it's important as we teach the value of investing time and effort in the land. I am investing in him as he invests in me. Working and hunting at the farm are the times when we really talk. Topics are all over the board — from school to football to, most importantly, our spiritual journeys. It's how we share our lives with each other."

Cousins and his son also like to turkey hunt, although the elder admits he isn't going to convince anyone he's a calling champion, especially his son.

"My son and I turkey hunted together for the first three seasons," he said. "Luckily the second and third season, we were able to get him a few gobblers. Of course, every season, most of the gobblers would humble us. I remember the last season we hunted together. He finally stated that he was ready to go it alone and call his own birds. I knew he was tired of the bad notes coming off my slate at what always seemed to be critical times. I never will forget the strange grins and looks I got when I would produce those terrible screeching noises."

I am thrilled to have killed that buck last fall and that our long-term efforts to improving habitat, including planting high-quality food plots, are continuing to pay off. I'm looking forward to my son having the chance to take an even better buck this coming season."

Whether it's hunting, fishing or hanging around the fire pit, Cousins and his family treasure the farm. "God blessed my family with this farm, and we intend to honor him by being good stewards of the land and the wildlife that inhabit it," he said. 🙏



Cousins works hard to maintain and improve wildlife habitat at his family farm.

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SANCTUARIES: The Key to Holding Mature Bucks

*Why you need them,
and how to create and
manage them.*

By Gerald Almy

After you've solved the food part of the habitat equation by enhancing natural forage and establishing food plots, no project can help your hunting more than creating a sanctuary to help make the property attractive to mature bucks.

Charles J. Alsheimer

As an outdoor writer specializing in deer management, I pour over every biological paper that might provide insights into mature white-tails. I've seen many great articles and some that mostly cover old ground. But one that sticks in my mind is a University of Georgia study that monitored the behavior of several mature bucks during the firearms season. In a nutshell, the study showed that two 5-year-old bucks survived the season by holing up in a remote mountain laurel thicket during daylight. If there's an article that clearly documents the value of setting aside a sanctuary on your hunting property, that's it.

I've seen the same thing demonstrated on my land. I'm fortunate to have a little more than 116 acres. It's a nice property with varied habitat. But if I did not set aside a portion of this relatively small tract as a no-entry, no-hunting zone, I would be hard pressed to attract and hold mature bucks.

That was proven a few years ago, when an old, gray-coated buck with brown-stained antlers slipped out of that sanctuary late one afternoon and eased toward a creek I was watching to hook up with a late-cycling doe. He was six years old, with multiple kickers and bases just shy of six inches. I never formally scored him, but those mass and age numbers proved again the value of sanctuaries. I hadn't seen him before on trail cameras or while hunting. Neither had the neighbors.

The Power of Sanctuaries

Simply, sanctuaries attract old, reclusive bucks to your land and help hold them. Security is a mature buck's No. 1 priority. A properly laid-out sanctuary gives him that.

With a bit of planning and sometimes a few weekends of work, you can create a sanctuary that will attract older bucks to your property and hold them there. And if you don't offer such a security area for deer, it's extremely likely mature bucks will find one elsewhere when hunting pressure builds. They know their survival depends on it.

Definition

We'll define a sanctuary as an area that's declared completely off limits for hunting and other human activities so deer can have a location with abundant cover and no intrusion where they feel safe. The only exception to the rule should be when trailing a wounded deer.

Refuge is another good word. The sanctuary will probably encompass one or more prime bedding areas on your property but not all secondary or satellite bedding areas. You need to be able to hunt some areas bucks frequent regularly besides feeding spots.

At first glance, creating a sanctuary looks simple. Block off a remote area or section of your property that has some good cover, and leave it alone. Done.

Not so fast. Although not difficult, setting up a high-quality sanctuary that will improve the land's ability to hold mature bucks is a little more involved. It requires forethought, planning and careful execution to succeed. But it's worth the effort, because the result will be far better hunting on the areas you don't set aside.

The best area to select and how to lay out the sanctuary usually become clear as you analyze your hunting setup and neighboring landowner activities and attitudes. Do they hunt? Bow, gun, drives, weekends, every day? Do they practice quality deer management?

Take one step at a time as you analyze your hunting needs and the surrounding property owners' attitudes and behavior. Consider what you have, which areas older bucks would likely want to hole up in

(thick, remote), and what you need to add for habitat to make the chosen sanctuary the best, most productive one possible.

And what does that mean? The most productive sanctuary will hold more older-age bucks and produce better hunting throughout bow, gun and muzzleloader seasons year after year on areas you hunt.

It might seem puzzling, even illogical, but by not hunting a chunk of your property and managing it as a refuge, you will improve big-buck opportunities on the remainder of the area you do hunt.

Features of an Ideal Sanctuary

When deciding where to establish an area off-limits to hunting, look for several qualities. You can start now, but the best time to analyze the land and make final decisions is after deer season and before spring green-up. You won't hurt your hunting then. And during summer, thick foliage makes it harder to decide which areas are best to set aside.

Cover: This is obvious. The area should have lots of cover.

Water: It can take the form of ponds, springs, creeks, tanks or pools you've created by damming small streams.

Seclusion or remoteness: Areas that are steep, swampy, isolated, remote or hard to reach always make the best sanctuaries. They might already be largely left alone.

Recognizable borders: It's easier to let other hunters know the boundaries of the sanctuary if you have creeks, ridges, fence lines or other features to mark the edges. Otherwise, use ribbons, paint, or signs to designate the boundaries.

Practicality: Isolation is critical. Create it in a location that's easy

to avoid. Areas that are difficult to hunt undetected are perfect.

Note that I didn't list food plots. Keep those out of the sanctuary so they will attract bucks where you can harvest them.

Work required: All these elements affect the desirability of a sanctuary, or its attractiveness to a 3-year-old or older buck. The more of these features you have the better.

Some might be there already. If you're lucky, a perfect sanctuary might already exist and might just need to be put off limits to hunting and other human disturbance, such as scouting, hiking or ATV riding. In most cases, some elements might be present, but you can improve the location with habitat work during the off-season.

Basically, you can divide potential sanctuary areas into three work categories: those that require no enhancement and just need to be designated off limits, those that necessitate some extra habitat work to improve, and those that offer good potential because of location, remoteness, neighboring land use or other factors but need to be created with a few weekends of elbow grease and chainsaw or dozer work.

How Many Sanctuaries, How Big, and Where?

Those are the preliminary questions you should answer before deciding how much extra work each area needs to make it appealing.

In general, one sanctuary is good for 40 to 200 acres. For larger parcels, you might want more. A lot depends on the vegetation and topography. Sometimes, two or even three areas just scream to be placed off limits, such as a native grass stands bucks flock to when pressure builds or a remote canyon that's difficult to hunt because of shifting winds. You might want one main sanctuary and one or two

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The best sanctuaries have brush, blowdowns, shrubs, hinge cuts, vines and stickers.

smaller satellite ones.

Size? Anywhere from five to several hundred acres might be involved. It depends on topography, prevailing winds, the amount of land available, thickness of the vegetation, surrounding land use, quality of the habitat and other factors. These need to be considered for each specific property.

Some landowners reserve as much as two-thirds of their hunting area as a sanctuary. That's extreme, though, and usually is not necessary or practical. Often, five to 25 percent is a good compromise.

Selecting the Site

Besides size, you must determine the location of the refuge. This depends a lot on the location of areas with good existing cover. Those are clearly the first spots to look.

It's also vital to consider your neighboring property owners' land-use habits. If they're hardcore if-it's-brown-it's-down types, you want the sanctuary as far from that border as possible. Conversely, a non-hunting or seldom-hunted property is perfect to abut your sanctuary against because it enlarges and enhances the benefits of your reserve.

In my situation, half of my neighboring landowners don't hunt, but the others hunt virtually every day. Abutting my off-limits area against the non-hunting neighbors' property almost doubles the size and value of my sanctuary.

Also, think about access to areas you plan to hunt, considering the deer's senses of sight, hearing and smell. You don't want the sanctuary positioned where you can alert deer as you access your stands by having the sanctuary immediately downwind. And you don't want it where deer can see or hear you.

Remoteness, elevation, steepness, boot-grabbing mud or anything else that discourages human entry is also a plus. The most useful sanctuaries are in hard-to-reach areas where rough habitat already discourages humans from penetrating.

Studying topographic maps and satellite images, such as those on Google Earth are a good starting point for locating the best sanctuary sites. Then, scout on foot to get a complete picture, and make sure an area fits a deer's needs to escape humans and find security.

Although it's often recommended, unless you have a large property, putting the sanctuary near the middle of a tract might not always be the best choice. You'll probably want to hunt or otherwise use perimeter areas at various times. On smaller properties, that means a lot of human traffic from every direction around that center core — perhaps

more than a mature buck will be willing to withstand.

For small-tract landowners, it's often a better bet to have it adjoin a tract that isn't hunted, landowners who practice quality deer management or a distant corner that's easy to stay out of and not circle continuously as you hunt around it. If you're surrounded by landowners who shoot any legal buck, though, a central location might be the only appropriate choice.

Benches, brushy hollows, heads of draws, wind-damaged tracts, weed-choked conifer stands, regrowing clear-cuts and overgrown marshes are prime areas.

Beyond remoteness, favorable bordering land use and a setup that lets you access your hunting areas without spooking deer in the sanctuary, cover is the most crucial ingredient. The more natural low-growing cover it has, the better.

If an area offers a jungle of thick vegetation, it might already serve as a sanctuary. Sign or trail-camera images will tell you if that's true. In that situation, simply stay out, and delineate the boundaries to create your sanctuary. Chances are, though, that some habitat work may make it even better.

Improving and Enhancing Sanctuaries

Felling some low-quality trees in the area to create more security is a simple and productive way to enhance a potential sanctuary. That gives the deer bedding cover, protection from wind and tender branch tips they can browse on.

Cut some of these only partially through at waist to chest high. Sever them just enough so they fall but remain attached to the stump and roots (hinge-cutting). These will usually live for another year or two, providing even more browse and cover.

Another way to enhance a refuge is to plant clusters of conifers. Putting in some fast-growing pines, cedars or spruce provides a wind-break and thermal cover that offers shelter from storms during winter, attracting more bucks to your sanctuary. They'll also provide a cool, shaded spot where bucks can escape summer's heat. Plant them 10 to 20 feet apart in clusters of one-quarter to one acre. Shrubs offer another ingredient you can add if the sanctuary is still too open.

Finally, if you have lots of open fields but with little cover, these can easily be converted to terrific sanctuaries by planting native warm-season grasses. These will grow 5 to 7 feet tall, providing superb security cover and protection from cold winter winds, yet they will remain open enough overhead to allow warming winter sunlight in.

The Final Step: Do Not Disturb

The main thing that makes or breaks a sanctuary is whether you and others who use the property respect the meaning of those words. Post signs, paint markings or print maps that show the borders and be sure everyone who uses the property knows where the boundaries are.

Stay out except to retrieve a wounded deer or to do additional habitat work in spring, if necessary. You want the oldest buck in the area to believe that's the most secure spot around — the place he needs to be to survive.

Give him that and he is more likely to stay put. Then next fall, when he's even bigger and you catch him outside the sanctuary chasing a doe or seeking a bite to eat from a lush food plot, you'll get your chance. Be ready. 🦌

Newest Perennial Food Plot Blend Imperial Whitetail Vision

Includes Imperial Whitetail Clover,
WINA-100 Chicory and WINA-210 Kale



unsurpassed attraction the first
fall and continuing perennial
performance for years.

One reason Whitetail Institute food plot products continue to lead the industry is the continuous effort it puts into scientific research, development and real-world testing — and not just with potential new products. The Whitetail Institute puts the same effort into making sure its existing products are the best they can be. Vision, which replaces Double-Cross in the Whitetail Institute's perennial forage lineup, is a prime example of this process of evolution.

The idea behind Double-Cross was to develop a food plot product that could provide the multi-year performance of perennials and the increased fall tonnage and attraction of annuals the first year. That was accomplished by Double-Cross's blend of Imperial Whitetail Clover and Whitetail Institute annual brassicas, a formula that proved successful.

improvement through the addition of new clovers, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory and WINA-210 Forage Kale. The Imperial Whitetail Clover and Whitetail Institute chicory components of Vision provide abundant protein year-round for antler growth and overall herd health and can last up to five years from one planting. Whitetail Institute kale increases first-year attraction and tonnage even further and provides essential carbohydrates deer need during fall and winter. Imperial Whitetail Clover, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory and WINA-210 kale are only available in Whitetail Institute products.

Perennial Forage Components

Vision features the latest Whitetail Institute proprietary clover varieties. These varieties, which are included in Imperial Whitetail Clover, bring the same superior attraction and high protein content to Vision on a year-round basis. WINA-100 perennial forage chicory is included in Vision for several reasons, the most important of which is its attractiveness to deer. Unlike other chicories, which can get leathery and waxy as they mature, WINA-100 chicory stays tender and palatable to deer. By offering Imperial Whitetail Clover and WINA-100 chicory, initial and multi-year attraction is boosted even more by offering deer a variety of food sources in one food plot perennially. WINA-100 chicory is also extremely high in protein, and its roots can extend several feet deep into the soil, a characteristic that helps make Vision even more drought-tolerant.

Annual Forage Component

WINA-210 Kale, another proprietary Whitetail Institute forage component of Vision, is the most attractive kale variety the Whitetail Institute has tested. WINA-210 was developed by selecting candidate kale varieties and then repeating cycles of isolating those that best exhibited rapid emergence and attractiveness to deer. At the end of each cycle, only the offspring that best exhibited these traits went on for more testing. The result, WINA-210 kale, has proven through Whitetail Institute testing to establish and grow quickly, and provide superior attraction. And like other brassicas, WINA-210 kale gets even sweeter as the first frosts of fall increase their sugar content.

Vision is designed for sites with soil that is loam, light clay or heavier and that receive at least four hours of filtered or indirect sunlight a day. For more information about new Imperial Whitetail Vision, visit whitetailinstitute.com, or call the Whitetail Institute at (800) 688-3030. 🔥

FOUR SECRETS FOR HUNTING FOOD PLOTS

By Scott Bestul



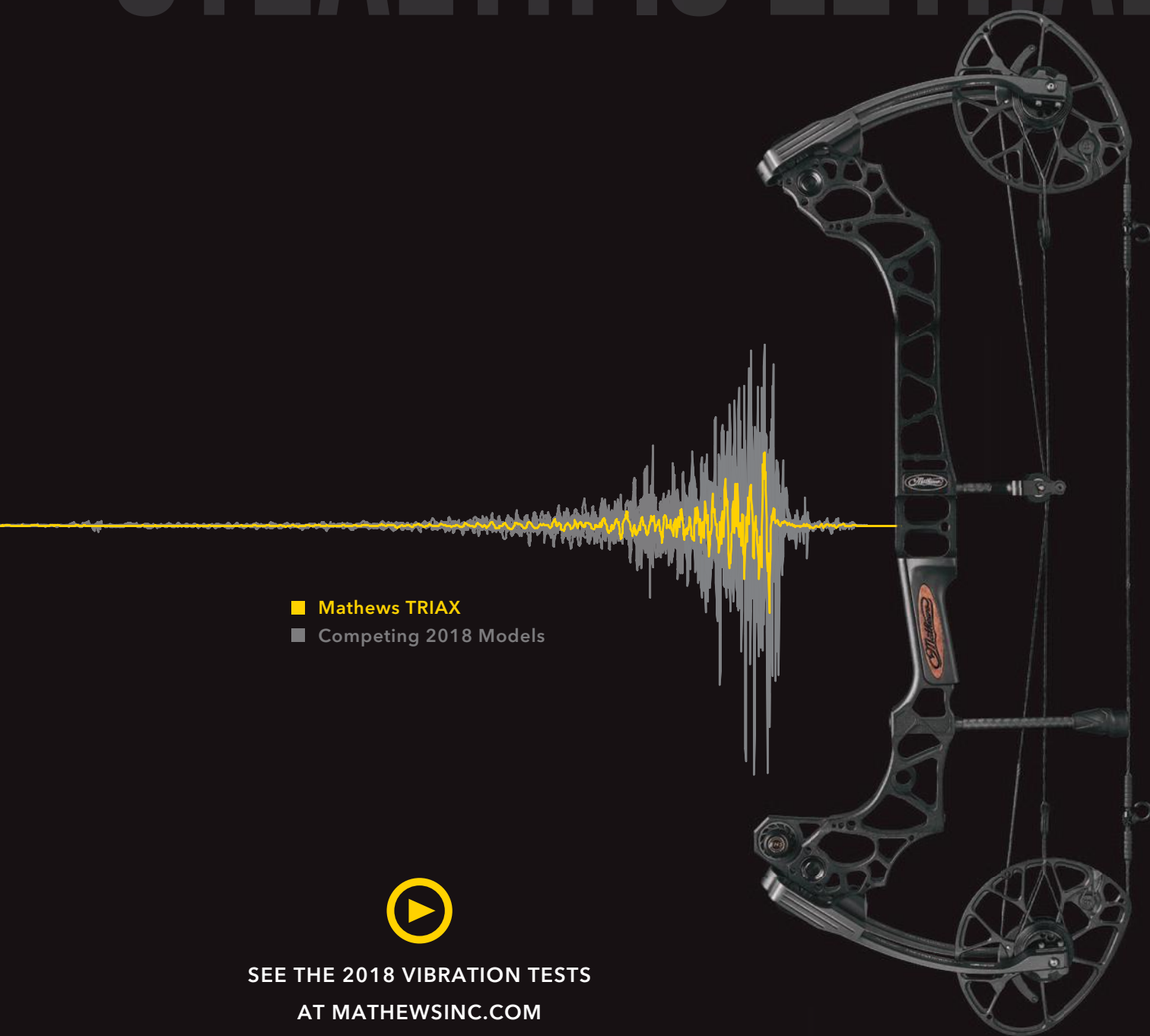
Charles J. Alsheimer

I don't know what's going on with my neighbor and December, but it's getting a little eerie. Alan is an uber-busy farmer who caught the bowhunting bug several years ago, and because a fall spent in a combine doesn't equate to many hours in a tree stand, my friend faces significant hurdles as a deer hunter. From the first blush of the season opener in September and through the rut, Alan's field time is measured in bushels of corn and soybeans, not hours in a deer stand.

So, here's where it gets weird. In each of the past three seasons, Alan has killed the best buck of his life. This does not make sense on the surface, especially when you consider that in each of those seasons, my friend has hunted less than one week before tagging out. After he killed his buck last season (on only his third day in a tree stand), I considered comparing my hours-in-a-stand-per-buck-killed

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statistic to Alan's. Not needing any more lessons in humility, I elected to not do the math.

Still, my neighbor's hot streak is relatively simple to explain: Alan just knows how to hunt food plots. If you're tempted to dismiss this notion, don't. As many deer managers quickly learn, there's a huge difference between planting great deer food and consistently killing mature bucks over those plantings. Pulling that off regularly is a matter of careful preparation, a smart game plan and strict discipline. Here's how to pull it off.

Make a Sweet Spot

It's always a pleasure to produce a killer plot of clover that sucks deer in like bikers to Sturgis. The problem is, if there's any size to the plot, killing a buck can be difficult (at least with a bow). Watching a pile of deer pour into a plot is a hoot, but if your target buck spends the afternoon browsing out of range, pleasure can slowly turn to frustration.

Iowa expert Roger Sapper (profiled in the previous issue of *Whitetail News*) found an easy answer to this problem. Sapper planted a ridge-top plot in Imperial Whitetail Clover but quickly learned that much of the 2-plus acre field was, of course, out of bow range.

"I remember one of the first nights I sat that plot," he said. "I had 16 mature bucks show up to feed on clover. And that's not even counting does and fawns. I finally managed to shoot a nice buck that afternoon, but there were a whole lot of deer that never fed into bow range."

Sapper solved the problem with a simple but clever fix.

"About two weeks before the bow opener, I started to mow the clover just within bow range of my stand," he said. "Right when I was

getting ready to hunt, the most tender, palatable stuff was growing by the stand. The rest of the clover was pounded as well but just a little later in the season. Suddenly, almost every deer that entered that plot was headed right to the clipped area. It really worked perfectly, and I actually had to laugh at myself a bit. Before I figured that out, I was just going to make the plot smaller. How dumb would it have been to plow up an acre or more of perfectly good clover?"

Sapper's technique also has a twist that can produce similar results. Before the season opener, simply fertilize the part of a plot within range of the stand or blind. The plants there will be a little tastier than the stuff growing in the rest of the plot, and you'll have effectively steered your deer.

Play the (Cross) Wind

Even the greenest deer hunter has heard the term play the wind and recognizes the importance of not letting whitetails smell human odor. Of course, the phrase makes perfect sense, but there's one problem: It's too simplistic.

Imagine hunting your favorite food plot, with a stand or blind placed at the edge, where a buck will follow one or more entry trails to the feed. Most of us envision an ideal wind as blowing directly from the buck to us, making it impossible for the deer to catch our scent. Trouble is, unless the buck is out of his mind with passion and following a doe, he's not likely to move during those conditions. Think about it. Most mature bucks live and die by their noses, which is the sense that rarely fails them. Although a mature buck will sometimes travel with the wind at his back, I've been around the block enough times that I never bet on it.

So, what's the solution? Adam Hays, one of the most successful bowhunters I know, taught me the perfect solution, which he calls hunting the "almost-right" wind. Sound confusing? It's not. The almost-right wind is the one during which a buck can use his nose but is still good enough for you. In most cases, this is a crosswind that lets the buck monitor scent for most of his walk. But other situations exist. One of my favorites is an obstacle (a bend in a trail or the dog-leg in a food plot) that forces a buck to walk, even for just 10 or 15 yards, without the wind advantage.

Placing a stand at this critical spot is an absolute killer, and it's why Alan killed his dandy buck this past December. Alan knew enough to wait for the ultra-cold conditions that force a post-rut buck to feed, and then picked a stand that overlooked a food plot full of late-season goodies. But the capper was this: The stand he selected let the mature buck walk into the food plot with the wind mostly in his face. The buck was just a few steps away from catching Alan's wind when my friend sent an arrow through his ribcage.

Setups such as this are perfect for fooling mature bucks that only move when conditions are right. Alan and I knew the mature 9-pointer well. We had no daylight pics of him and knew he'd be a tough customer. But by waiting for perfect conditions and giving the buck his nose, Alan was able to tag him.

Double-Whammy Set

Matt Harper, a frequent contributor to *Whitetail News* and a certified big-buck assassin, plants and maintains many food plots, and he's mastered tagging mature whitetails on or near them. Harper said one of the most difficult times to hunt food plots is the normally exciting

buildup to the rut.

"I can't tell you the number of times I've sat right on the food plot edge with my only good shooting available into the plot itself," he said. "The trouble with that is mature bucks are infamous for circling a plot, checking the entry trails for the scent of an estrous doe. If your only shot is to the plot, you can't kill that cross-trailing buck."

After many such frustrating encounters, Harper committed to what he calls perimeter trails, which transect the main entry trails does use to access a plot.

"Perimeter trails can be tough to spot, as they're usually pretty faint," he said. "They're typically off the plot 30 to 50 yards, depending on the situation, but bucks love to use them because they can check the status of does without ever stepping foot in the plot itself."

Of course, committing to a perimeter trail comes with a price, Harper learned.

"The crazy thing about the rut is, about the time you think a buck is never going to enter a plot unless he's behind a hot doe, well, that's when he does exactly that," he said with a laugh. "About the time you devote yourself to staying in the timber, you'll watch a monster waltz into a plot to dog a doe, cruise the edge or check a scrape. Trust me, I've had it happen more than once."

Being creative, Harper started to look for stand setups that let him enjoy the best of both worlds.

"Now, one of my favorite food plot setups is a stand hung in a tree 15 to 20 yards off the plot edge," he said. "In that setup, I can shoot into the plot if a buck cruises the edge or checks a scrape, but I can usually cover the best perimeter trails, which is perfect for that buck that's reluctant to stick his nose into that opening. I shot a nice 150-class whitetail this past fall using just that kind of setup."

Midday Magic

Hunting food plots is typically a morning or evening affair. That makes sense, considering those are peak feeding times for white-tails. But plots can also shine at midday, especially at one of the most frustrating times of the season; the period of peak breeding many hunters refer to as lockdown.

Lockdown hunting can be some of the toughest of the year for various reasons. Does and fawns are less active, so tired after weeks of harassment from bucks that they're

reluctant to move. Immature bucks are lying low (if mature buck numbers are good, the little guys are tired of getting beat up) or bombing throughout the landscape, trying to figure out where all that wonderful estrous scent is coming from. And mature bucks? Well, they've usually got an estrous doe pinned down in thick cover, afraid to let her move for fear a stronger buck will swoop in and take her away. These factors line up to make the typical morning or evening food plot hunt less productive.

But midday feeding can be stellar during this period. For starters, a doe being tended by a buck can't bed for three days without eating once in a while. I've talked with several guides and whitetail experts who have watched lone does feeding at midday during lockdown and then, by glassing nearby cover, spotted a mature buck standing nearby. Perhaps the buck is content to let his mate feed at midday, when other deer are less likely to be active. I can't say for sure, but it's something to watch.

One thing I know is that mature bucks that lose their does (after tending them) frequently take a breather to eat and drink before looking for their next mate. Convention-

al wisdom holds that bucks don't take time to eat during the rut, but I've come to believe that is an old wives' tale. Sure, a buck loses a ton of weight during the rut, but I'm convinced increased activity is mostly to blame. Think about it. If a buck stopped eating for the three to four weeks of rutting activity each fall, he wouldn't be skinny. He'd be dead. And because mature bucks are known for midday activity during breeding season, I wouldn't hesitate to sit a food plot (especially one surrounded by good habitat) while the sun is high.

Conclusion

One of the main reasons I love food plotting is the enormous satisfaction I get from keeping the deer I hunt well fed and happy to stick close to the properties I hunt. But I also appreciate the endless challenge food plots present. I've learned that growing the best deer food in the neighborhood is no easy task. And perhaps even a tougher hurdle is figuring out how to tag mature bucks as they relate to my plantings. These tips have proved effective for that, and I hope they'll help you this fall. 🍂



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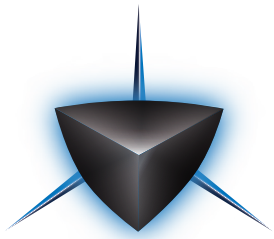
By Neil and Craig Dougherty

The phone read, “Message from Steve Scott.” I knew what it was about, but I didn’t have the strength. I wasn’t ready for another “Charlie will be missed” conversation. Steve was calling to mourn the loss of a friend, a man we both loved, admired, and respected, a man who gave much and took little, a man who would be missed by the entire deer hunting community.

I got back to Steve and the call went as expected — sadness, a voice quiver or two, then a few testimonials to Charlie’s greatness. The call ended with Steve asking me to share personal remembrances of Char-

lie with the *Whitetail News* family (at times like these we are all family).

Humbled and honored I managed a shaken “Of course, will be proud to.” The next day I started writing, and revising and I wrote and I revised again, and again. The writing and revising went on for at least a week. Somehow writing about our times together made me feel better, therapeutic in a sense, like I was giving him a hug goodbye. Of course, I wrote my way through the deadline and missed getting my copy to Steve in time to make the edition of the *Whitetail News*



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BAD TO THE BONE



honoring Charlie Alsheimer. Steve was good enough to give me another shot at it for which I am grateful. This time he added, "Have Neil give you a hand this time." — *Craig Dougherty*

We knew him years before we met him. Like most who live for deer and deer hunting, we met Charlie Alsheimer through his books and articles. He was our go-to guy. Anything he wrote we had to read. He was that kind of a writer. He was a real-deal kind of writer. He wrote about deer and he wrote about deer hunting. He wrote like he had been there and done that, because he was there and he did it, each and every day of the year.

We bought some hunting property in Steuben County and before long the by-line turned into a living, breathing person. Turns out, we were almost neighbors with Charlie, a few short miles as the crow flies. Before long, we were fast friends. We opened (and closed) the deer season together, planted food plots together, and raised our kids together. Charlie "helped" us build our cabin and we made our living in the same industry. Charlie called us every Christmas morning and we called Charlie every year on his birthday (which just happens to be the turkey opener). Craig called him brother and to Neil he was a Dad. He was one of the best people we have ever known. He loved his God and he loved his wife Carla, and he loved his son Aaron—and the deer. There were always the deer. Charlie had a 40-acre enclosure on his 200-acre farm where he could intensely study deer, their behavior and also photograph them.

Charlie started us down our Quality Deer Management (QDM) path, and he was the first to expose us to the "if you let them go, they will grow" concept, and he had the pictures to show it. "So, Charlie, do you really think we can make this QDM stuff work here in upstate NY?" "Man, you guys are already doing it, you're mostly bowhunters, and you miss more than you hit." Those words came from Charlie almost 30 years ago and truer words were never spoken, at least in Craig's case.

We learned more about deer from Charlie than all our deer biologist

buddies put together. He made deer real, and that's because deer to Charlie were real, more than just a critter with four feet and a tail. He viewed deer like you would a person. He understood deer, like you would understand a best friend or a wife or husband. His descriptions of deer read more like great literature than something you would encounter in biology 101. That was the beauty of Charlie. When he photographed deer he spoke in soft tones, urging them to strike just the right pose. Charlie knew every deer that frequented his farm; he knew where they bedded and why; he knew what they ate and he knew when they bred. Charlie Alsheimer taught us how to think like a deer.

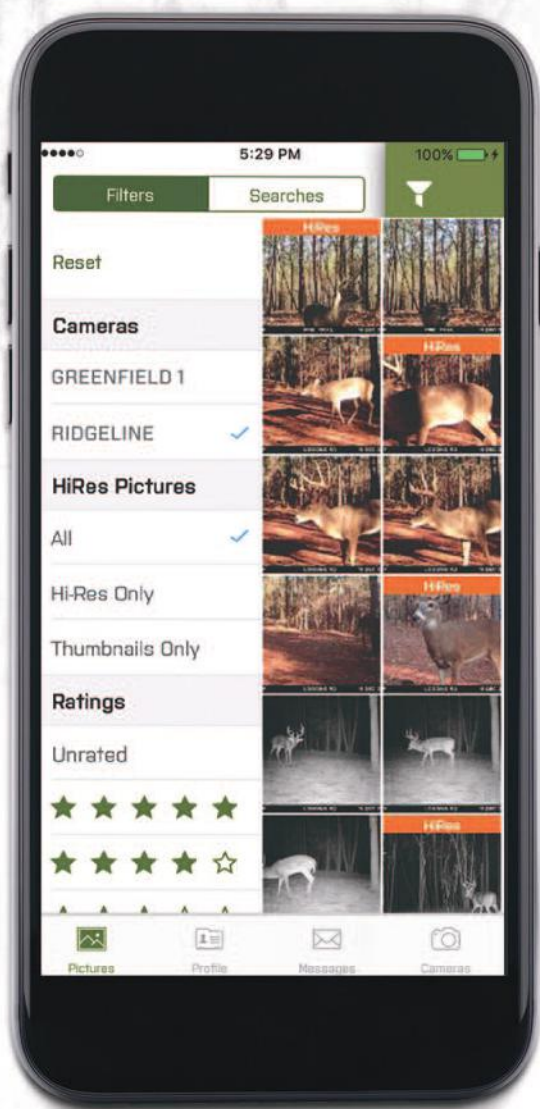
One of Neil's fondest memories of Charlie is a weekend they spent together photographing deer. Charlie was intent on teaching Neil how to become a nature photographer or at least how to run a decent camera. They headed to a private deer enclosure in the Adirondack mountains. New Nikon in hand, Neil followed Charlie for an entire weekend as Charlie positioned the shots and called out the f-stops, both shooting the same scenes. Neil came home with a dozen or so "deer pictures" and Charlie came home with six rolls of "magazine-quality photos," Charlie may have taught Neil how to run a camera but no one could run a

camera like Charlie Alsheimer. He was in a class by himself. His deer photos have that special "Charlie look" that jump off the page at you and grab a hunter's heart. They remain unequaled to this day.

Charlie Alsheimer is what is referred to as a "behaviorist". A "deer behaviorist" to be precise. He spent countless hours meticulously documenting deer behavior and would share his observations with the whitetail community. Did you know how many times a deer chews a cud of Whitetail Clover before swallowing or how long it takes them to grind up a medium-sized acorn? Charlie did. What is the average height of a licking branch. Charlie knew. This is the kind of stuff Charlie kept track of — that and a thousand other things about deer. He was a walking encyclopedia. If you had a question about deer, Charlie had the answer. Heck, he lived with them for 30-some years. He was the Jane Goodall of the deer world and more. He was a master communicator. Last we counted, he had written seven books and thousands of articles and his photos have appeared in countless magazines. He hosted an outdoor TV show, packed auditoriums across America and his calendars are collectors' items. His deer portraits, oh, those beautiful portraits. Need we say more?

Charlie brought deer and deer hunting to life. He made it real because Charlie Alsheimer was real, a real-deal kinda guy. For that we owe him and our kids owe him and so will their kids. And their kids after them... How do you spell L-E-G-A-C-Y?

Rest in peace our friend! 🙏



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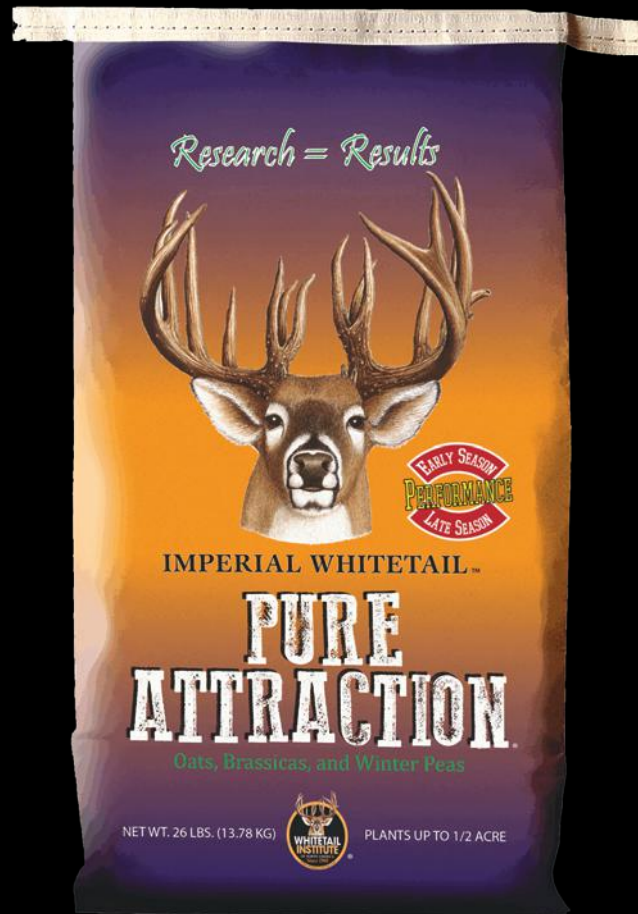
PURE ATTRACTION

Designed for maximum attraction during the entire

By WILSON SCOTT



Imperial Whitetail Pure Attraction is one of the Whitetail Institute's most popular food plot products for the entire season. The reason is simple: That's precisely the product which the Whitetail Institute developed Pure Attraction to push the upper limits of attraction from the beginning of the season through the late



If you're a longtime reader of the *Whitetail News*, you likely already know that Whitetail Institute product development is goal-oriented and follows strict protocols to ensure that its research, development and testing are highly accurate. Even so, I'll go a little deeper and give you some inside information about why, like other Whitetail Institute food plot products, Pure Attraction is a blend of

or compatible plant types can maximize the overall performance of a plot. Another reason is that having various types of highly attractive plants at the site can increase attraction further by offering deer a variety of food options within the plot.

With Pure Attraction, the Whitetail Institute took this a step farther. All the forage components in Pure Attraction establish quickly

and are highly attractive to deer immediately. As with other Whitetail Institute food plot products, the components in Pure Attraction are designed for compatibility with one another, ensuring top performance from the planting. Even so, the critical reason Pure Attraction maintains its extraordinarily high attractiveness consistently through the entire season is that it's designed with forage components that reach maximum attractiveness at different but overlapping times.

Early-season components: Pure Attraction's early-season components include the Whitetail Institute's proprietary Whitetail Oats and specially selected varieties of winter peas. Small amounts of triticale and winter wheat are also included to further enhance winter-hardiness. Each of these components establishes and grows quickly and offers phenomenal early attraction. They're the reason Pure Attraction begins attracting deer soon after it starts to grow and they continue to do so into the cold late season.

Whitetail Oats are the primary early-season component in Pure Attraction. Whitetail Oats are astonishingly attractive to deer because of their high sugar content. They're also drought-resistant, which can be a huge benefit if rainfall in early fall is unusually low. Whitetail Oats are also cold-tolerant, allowing them to keep attracting deer longer into the hunting season. (If you'd like to read more about how attractive they are, you'll find an article about Whitetail Oats Plus on page 44 of this issue.)

It's no secret that deer love winter peas. Even so, some winter pea varieties are more attractive to deer than others. Pure Attraction contains winter peas that proved the most highly attractive to deer in Whitetail Institute testing. The triticale and winter wheat round out the early-season component list for Pure Attraction by boosting at-

traction through variety and longevity of the early-season forage group well into the cold winter months.

Late-season components: Pure Attraction's late-season components include the Whitetail Institute's proprietary WINA-210 Forage Kale and a smaller amount of Tall Tine Turnips. Although these components reach their maximum attractiveness after the first frosts of fall, they are also often attractive during the early season and add early season tonnage to a plot. When frosts arrive, Pure Attraction's late-season forage components get even sweeter. The late-season foliage and the underground tubers produced by the Tall Tine Tubers in Pure Attraction continue to attract and hold deer during the cold winter months.

Take a look at the seedbed preparation and planting instructions, and you'll find that Pure Attraction is easy to plant. (You can find the instructions on the back of the product bags and at whitetail-institute.com). Getting the seedbed as smooth as possible before planting isn't as critical when planting Pure Attraction as it is when planting perennials, because unlike perennials, Pure Attraction should be covered under a thin layer of loose soil. Just disk and, with the soil still loose, put out the fertilizer and Pure Attraction seed, and then lightly drag over the seed. (Do not disk the seed into the soil).

If you're looking for something to plant this fall that will establish quickly, attract deer during the early and late hunting season, produce lots of succulent and carbohydrate-rich forage in the early fall, and keep performing through winter, Pure Attraction is an excellent option. If you have questions about Pure Attraction or would like to order, call the Whitetail Institute's in-house consultants at (800) 688-3030. 🍂



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Tipping the Scales in Your Favor

By Bob Humphrey

“W

ment of our pragmatic proclamation, “You can’t eat antlers.” It’s also probably because we just don’t kill a lot of high-scoring deer. Regardless, when a Yankee hauls his deer up on the game pole, he hopes the scales tip favorably in his direction, for it means bragging rights and a full freezer.

In a sense, we’re not so different from the rest of the deer hunting world. Every hunter and landowner-conservationist want the scales to tip in their favor one way or another, whether it be on the game pole or in terms of the quantity and quality of deer on the land they hunt. We typically view those things in relative terms, compared to other hunters and landowners, particularly our neighbors. We want to maximize our opportunity to harvest a quality deer, and there’s much we can do to produce a more favorable proportion.

Although we might want to tip the scales of fortune in our favor, it’s fairly important that we also maintain balance between the land and the deer that live on it. When there are too many deer, the quality of deer and habitat suffers. Not enough deer and we are dissatisfied.

Investment Portfolio

We know land is a sound investment because, as the old saying goes, “They’re not making any more of it.” How we manage it will determine our return on that investment. And when it comes to managing investments, there is no sounder advisor than Mother Nature. Her driving force, natural selection, is geared toward optimizing the cost-benefit ratio; minimizing cost while maximizing benefit. And she’s been doing it for a long time.

Supplemental feeding might seem like a good idea in the short run. It’s a simple, direct way to increase available food and possibly pull more deer off your neighbor’s and onto your property. There might even be times when it’s vital or necessary, but during the long term, you’ll find the high cost does not produce an equivalent return on investment.

You’ll attract more deer but also maintain an artificially high number that will, through time, begin to degrade the habitat further. Even with an unlimited food supply, deer don’t just feed from feeders. By



Charles J. Alsheimer

concentrating them, you increase browsing pressure on native plants deer need in addition to what you put in those feeders. That artificially high population will be much more susceptible to severe weather or disease, and as we're interested in scales, it might help to remember that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In the long run, you're far better off managing to improve natural habitat quality, including but not limited to food.

Diversify

Habitat consists of food, water and cover, but they are not distinct entities. You also have to consider the juxtaposition of those variables. Like pieces of a puzzle, they must be properly matched to find the correct solution. Then, the value of the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. And there is a direct correlation between habitat diversity and quality.

If you have an actual investment broker, I'll bet he's advised you to diversify your portfolio, for the same reason we biologists recommend using seed mixes instead of single-species plantings. It's a hedge (if you'll pardon the pun) against disaster. A classic example is Fusion, a blend of Imperial Whitetail Clover and WINA chicory. Both will do well in average conditions, but the former does better in moister soils, and the latter has a deeper root system and is better able to reach moisture when it's scarce.

Remember, too, you want food on the land year-round. If you're going to plant trees and shrubs, you should plant a variety. Plant soft-mast producers, such as raspberries and blackberries for late summer, and plums, persimmons, apples or pears for early fall. Plant hard-mast producers, such as oak and chestnut, for late fall. You can further diversify your oaks between red and white varieties so you will always have some hard mast, regardless of annual climatic variations. And add chestnuts, as they will outcompete and outproduce most oaks any year.

Filling the Whole

I have avoided too many specifics and will continue to do so because there can be so much variability from one location to the next. A wildlife manager in New England might be more concerned with finding ways to ameliorate the effects of winter snow depth or cold temperatures, but one in the Southeast could be more concerned with predation, and another in the Southwest must address drought.

Rather than a solid object, think of your land as a bucket that you place on the scales. Into it, you pour all your habitat variables. When the bucket is full, you might think you have things under control. But Liebig's law of the minimum states: "Growth is controlled not by the total of resources available, but by the scarcest resource." Biologists refer to this as a limiting factor. It's the lowest hole in the bucket, and everything you pour into your land in terms of time, money and effort will only continue to leak until you plug the lowest hole.

For example, you might have ample food, but if you lack sufficient bedding cover, the deer aren't going to hang around for long, particularly when you consider how little of their day is actually spent on their feet feeding during daylight. The longer they stay on your property and the closer they are to your food plots, the better your odds of seeing them during hunting hours. Conversely, if you lack food or water, they might spend some of a 24-hour day on your land bedding, but will be gone when they need a drink or to eat.

Different Scales

Don't be shortsighted. Sometimes, it's helpful to use a different scale in terms of how you look at your land in relation to your neighbor's. Instead of just asking, "What does he have that I don't?" look at the landscape as a whole. Look for things you could do cooperatively to improve each other's deer herds if he is like-minded in his goals.

The cost-benefit ratio can also apply to real costs and benefits. If you lack water and he lacks bedding cover, it might be a lot more economically sound for both of you to put a little into improving what you already have than to spend a lot on water and your neighbor on cover. Always make sure you have the most attractive food sources for fall and winter and then focus on what he doesn't have, which might be high-protein, warm-season perennials crops that will better meet the deer's year-round nutritional needs. Again, scale back, and think of your property as one piece of a larger puzzle. Then determine how it best fits into the whole.

Going back to your own lot for a moment, remember the importance of diversity, and don't just focus on food. Rather than just making your land part of a deer's home range, you want it to contain at least part of that deer's core area (see the sidebar below). It's great to invite deer to dinner, but if you really want to have your way with them, you get them to spend the night.

Conclusion

If you were looking for specifics on how to manage your property, I apologize, but every lot is different, and you're far better off knowing the general principles and then applying them to your situation. And if you're not worn out with analogies, I'll offer one more — the story of the straw that broke the camel's back. That back was loaded down with straw, but in the end, it was the last one that made a difference. Somewhat, the same sometimes applies to management. Often, it's the little things — the ounce of prevention, the extra attention to detail or sharing the burden with your neighbor rather than carrying it all on your back — that can tip the scales in your favor. 🦌

Home Range Versus Core Area

Biologists sometimes define a deer's home range as the geographic area within which they spend 90 percent of their time during a year. I find that a bit misleading. It might be better described as the geographic area within which you have a 90 percent chance of finding that deer at any time during the year. Home ranges vary considerably from one geographic area to the next, but if you took a nationwide average, it would probably be close to a square mile.

Within that is a smaller core area, sometimes defined as where a deer spends 50 percent of its time during the year. Intuitively, that doesn't sound so good compared to 90 percent for a home range. But it's actually a much smaller area, so your odds of finding a deer there are much better.

Not surprisingly, the core area also contains bedding cover, because that's where deer spend most of every day. Providing sufficient food is important, but a little extra effort directed at creating bedding cover could go a long way toward tipping the deer-sighting scales in your favor.

REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

about Whitetail Institute products...



A friend of mine, Sam, owns 8 acres (2.5 acres tillable) in north-central Pennsylvania, and he and I have been using Whitetail Institute's products for over four years. What a difference Whitetail Institute products have made on our hillside. It made the area come alive with game! The products that work best for us are Imperial Whitetail Clover and Tall Tine Tubers. The deer tear them up!

I got Sam started doing this with him by saying, "You plant it and they will come," and they have. We mostly archery hunt, and the deer sightings nearly every time out are awesome. We don't hunt directly over the plots. We hunt up on the hillsides, and having the deer going and coming from the plots has made hunting them enjoyable. If you have does, you do have bucks! We have nicer bucks than we ever had before. I am still waiting for the right one, but Sam seems to have all the chances to score, but seems to miss. He didn't miss this past fall (photo).

We enjoy looking out on the hillside from the house and see the deer, turkeys and bears in the plots feeding or coming or going to and from them.

Whitetail Institute's fast results of sending soil test kits and soil test results and recommendations back has been awesome because there have been times we needed answers before the next trip back up to the mountains. Thank you, Whitetail Institute.

Steven Haas - New Jersey



Thanks to Whitetail Institute products and Whitetail Institute customer service I harvested an 8-point with my bow earlier in the season than ever before. I killed him over my Pure Attraction plot. The big 11-point and the 8-point (photo 1) were killed in that plot opening day. The selfie was over a No-Plow plot where the deer absolutely were tearing it up. I got my first ever recurve kill over that plot! The trail cam pic is the one I'm after now. We've had more big deer on our property than we ever have. We will definitely be planting more Whitetail Institute products next season. Thanks tons, Whitetail Institute!

Timothy Shutler - West Virginia



My best luck has been with Imperial Whitetail Clover. It draws deer into my area for most of the fall. Once snow falls, Winter-Greens becomes the main food source. This formula has helped me harvest two great bucks with the gun and bow (photo) over the last two years in western Wisconsin. Keep up the great work!

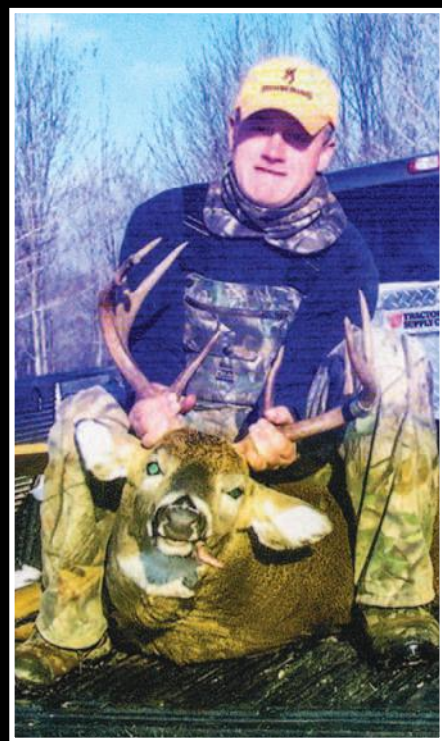
Keith Lantta - Wisconsin



My daughter, Olivia, shot this brute of a buck. We had deer pouring into the Imperial Whitetail Clover even before legal shooting time. At one point, we had four or five bucks and just as many does feeding contently in the 2-acre plot. We waited for about 40 minutes until we had great video light, and she went into auto pilot after that. We've got trail cam pic's of him every season for seven years. That makes him at least 8.5 years old. He has always been a 6-point or 7-point. I only laid eyes on him twice in that span.

This Big 6, as we called him, (7 points this year) is as big-bodied a deer as I have ever witnessed and the most massive antlers throughout. As I told O, this is probably the lowest scoring buck you've ever shot, but probably the biggest trophy you'll ever get. Not many folks have a chance at an 8.5-year-old legend of the farm. One very proud father.

Jason Miller - Iowa



Imperial Whitetail Clover is my personal favorite food plot product. My land is in Pennsylvania. I have seen a lot more deer and turkeys on the land since planting it. My Chicory Plus (now Fusion) field is now 4 years old, and I still see exceptional bucks and big-bodied does on it. I have used 30-06 Mineral and 30-06 Plus Protein for two or three years now, and every year there are exceptional bucks taken off these properties. Thank you, Whitetail Institute for all of the great products. Enclosed are a few photos of what Whitetail Institute has helped me do.

Raymond Cary - New York



(Continued on page 61)

Help Your Deer *THRIVE* During Fall and Winter

New 30-06 Thrive nutritional supplement provides vital nutrition and attraction during fall and winter

Fall, winter and hunting season are right around the corner. As you get your food plots and hunting gear ready, don't forget to make new 30-06 Thrive part of your preparations. Thrive is designed to provide deer with targeted nutrition they need during fall and winter.

Most Whitetail Institute customers are already familiar with the other Whitetail Institute 30-06 supplement products (Imperial Whitetail 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin supplement, 30-06 Plus Protein Mineral/Vitamin Supplement and 30-06 Mineral Supplement Block), which are designed for spring and summer. They're scientifically formulated for the nutritional needs of deer during those seasons — to help maximize antler growth, keep does in top shape during the late stages of pregnancy, help increase their milk production for newborn fawns and promote overall herd health. New 30-06 Thrive brings the Whitetail Institute's line of 30-06 products full circle by helping deer maintain body weight and overall health during fall and winter.

Thrive is scientifically formulated with a specific balance of energy, protein, mineral and vitamin components to help deer maintain body weight and overall health during fall and winter. It's nutrient-dense for winter stamina, helps deer maintain muscle mass and helps replenish critical minerals and vitamins. It also includes antioxidant nutrients that help deer maintain a healthy digestive system and aid in muscle and tissue recovery. 30-06 Thrive also contains Devour, the Whitetail Institute's exclusive scent and flavor enhancer, which is extremely attractive to deer.

Also, remember that the better condition you can help your bucks maintain during fall and winter, the less time it will take them to recover lost weight, and they'll have a better opportunity to direct more nutrients toward antler growth earlier the next spring.

Start putting out 30-06 Thrive when bucks have hardened their antlers and cooler fall weather arrives. In most areas, this generally occurs in September or October. Continue supplying Thrive through fall and winter until it's time to transition back to 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin Supplement or 30-06 Plus Protein as spring green-up occurs.

Thrive is designed for use in ground sites, trough feeders and gravity feeders, and it can be mixed with corn at a rate of 10 to 20 pounds of 30-06 Thrive to 100 pounds of corn. As with other 30-06 supplements, site selection is extremely important with 30-06 Thrive. Deer prefer to be in cover, so select a site in a wooded area where deer feel safe, preferably just off a well-used trail or crossing.

For additional information about new 30-06 Thrive nutritional supplement, visit whitetailinstitute.com or call (800) 688-3030.

(Caution: Thrive is so attractive to deer that some states consider it bait, so be sure to consult your local game laws before using or hunting over a 30-06 Thrive site.) 🦌



Jason Say



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RECONYX, See What You've Been Missing...

The Challenge of Food

Ivan Doorn. The northern Wisconsin logger is one of the best outdoorsmen I know, and he's a wizard with a chainsaw (pretty logical, given his occupation) and a keenly savvy deer manager. Tom can make whitetails bed, travel and feed with scary regularity, and his frequently filled buck tags are proof.

But if I've helped my big-woods friend in one aspect of whitetail management, it's been in the food plot realm. Most of the food plots I plant each year have plenty of competition. Corn, soybeans, alfalfa and even the odd food plot from a neighborhood hunter combine to compete with whatever seed I stick in the ground for deer. Don't get

woods. I've had the chance to assist Tom several times, and the prospect of getting quality whitetail food established in an area where farm fields are scarce to nonexistent is exciting. Of course, big-woods deer do an admirable job of surviving fine without help. Still, getting quality whitetail food sources going in timbered country shows the true power of improved nutrition and hunting attraction that only food plots can provide.

But big-woods plots come with challenges. It's tempting to think that a lush plot of clover or brassicas will immediately turn into the next great killing field, but there are plenty of hurdles to clear first. Although when any of the challenges of farm-country food plots disappear, unique ones take their place. Here's a look at how to establish, maintain and hunt food plots in the big woods.

Site Selection

The biggest challenge to big-woods food plotters is the most obvious. All those darned trees get in the way. Trees present an obstacle and also block sunlight from prospective plots. Although there are shade-



Food Plots in Big Timber

The best, least expensive and most productive option is to plant in an existing opening. One example I've seen used with great success is a log landing, which is a spot loggers have cleared to store hardwood or pulp trees after the trees have been harvested but before trucks can haul them out. Landings are typically on relatively level, well-drained sites that logging trucks can reach without getting stuck — a happy fact that can also make them excellent spots for a food plot. Log landings vary in size, but I've rarely seen one too small to host a productive plot.

You can find other openings in heavily forested areas. Old farm sites and homesteads might still be largely devoid of trees, with grass, weeds or brush presenting the only obstacle to a well-lit plot. Naturally occurring meadows and small grassy areas — provided they are well drained — can also be converted to food plots. Don't be tempted into planting in a seemingly dry marsh or wetland. These areas are frequently protected by state regulations, but even if a food plot is a legal option, lowland areas will fill with water at some point. Leave such areas for the critical habitat they provide for big-woods birds and other wildlife.

Some landowners I know have worked a deal with logging crews to bulldoze stumps and rocks from pre-determined areas as part of the logging contract. It's common for loggers to own or lease bulldozers to create access roads and carving out a plot or two is typically not a problem for them. This is also much less expensive than hiring someone with heavy equipment to visit a property miles from civilization.

One thing that's easy to neglect are the trees surrounding a plot. Remember, the taller these trees grow, the more shade they cast on the plot, even if the opening is a decent size. VanDoorn taught me to be merciless on these shade-casters. Unless the tree is a mast-producer or has some timber value, it gets dropped. Another lesson: VanDoorn stays vigilant on the trees growing on a plot's perimeter, felling any that grow tall in subsequent years.

Prep and Plant

If you read this magazine regularly, you know that soil prep — applying lime to adjust pH and fertilizing to maximize plant growth — is featured in almost every issue of Whitetail News. But if you're start-



ing food plots in timbered areas, this step becomes even more critical. Soils in forested areas are typically highly acidic, and increasing the pH can take time.

Deciding what to plant and when can also be a challenge in heavily forested areas. If I'm planting in spring or early summer, I typically go with Imperial Whitetail Clover or Fusion, as I like to establish perennials in at least half of my plots. Perennials are critical because, in addition to being highly attractive and nutritious, clover will be a go-to feed for deer in the spring because its one of the first things to green up. Northern deer can survive some pretty brutal winters, but come spring thaw, they're hungry, scraggly-looking critters, and clover will give them the boost they need at a critical time. Even better, a lush clover plot will sustain does and fawns well into summer and provide fantastic early-season hunting opportunities.

Weed control is typically less of an issue in the big woods, but the disturbed soil of a newly created plot will create some weed competition. Be prepared to mow clover/chicory plots early to knock back weeds and give your plot the jumpstart that will set the growing tone for the rest of summer. If mowing is tougher to accomplish, a backpack sprayer equipped with Slay or Arrest Max can be the answer.

If you're planting later in the summer or early fall, plot options expand. One of the most logical to me is Whitetail Oats Plus. For starters, oats are easy to plant. Though proper and thorough soil prep will yield better results, I'm convinced these large, aggressive seeds would germinate in a rock quarry if that were their only option. Oats can also be planted late in summer, which means time-crunched food plotters can make a weekend trip or two just before archery season, get their planting done and have a hunt-ready plot that will provide action for several months.

Finally, brassicas — such as Tall Time Tubers, Winter-Greens or Beets & Greens — are one of my go-to options wherever I plot. Perhaps the biggest advantage of planting brassicas is that whitetails typically focus on them after the first hard frosts of the season. This is huge, because the supreme attraction of a big-woods plot can make keeping food in them throughout hunting season difficult and focusing deer visits until late in the season makes sense. A big bonus of brassicas is they provide big woods deer with a high-energy, highly attractive food option for the stressful conditions of late fall and winter.

Expect your plots to receive heavy browsing pressure for two reasons. First, if you plant Whitetail Institute products, the plot you offer will be highly attractive, and it will probably be the proverbial only show in town when it comes to food plot fare. Second, because big-woods plots are typically smaller, it doesn't take a lot of deer many visits to have a pretty dramatic effect. Plant varieties that can stand up to heavy browsing, as well as those that feature a window of attraction (such as brassicas), will be the safest bets. Finally, erecting some sort of barrier — a tape laced with a deer-retardant or a solar-powered electric fence — is worth a look. I haven't used these, but two of my buddies (savvy food plotters) have, and they assure me they can be effective.

Raising the Bar

Food plots are a wonderful addition to any heavily timbered property, but don't make the mistake of thinking they're the final answer to making the ground reach its full potential. Proper timber management will attract and hold deer year-round and result in healthier whitetails and better hunting. Remember, Northern whitetails have

to endure extended winters, and counting on food plots to sustain deer until snow melt might not be realistic. That's when a sound timber-management program can kick in and help whitetails through the often-brutal conditions from late November through green-up.

VanDoorn recognizes this and, thanks to his experience as a logger, takes great pains to manage the timber surrounding his food plots. His region of northern Wisconsin is known for strong populations of aspen, and aggressive logging practices such as clearcutting keep this important tree species available for whitetails and other wildlife. Aspen benefits from clearcutting because a harvested tree sends shoots out from its root system — a process called sucker sprouting — in some cases as far as 100 feet from the original stump. Though aspen trees produce seeds, seedlings only flourish in full sunlight. In short, clearcutting is the best method for maintaining vital stands of aspen. Consult with a forester, habitat specialist or professional logger (preferably one with a deer hunting background) to develop a timber-harvest plan that will maintain aspen stands of uneven ages throughout your property.

Another often-neglected aspect of habitat management in Northern regions is the creation and management of conifers. Research has proven that whitetails can withstand brutally cold temperatures and biting winds if they can access thermal cover provided by species such as cedar, spruce and pine. Indeed, Northern whitetails will often travel dozens of miles to such winter yarding areas. Creating an area might be difficult, but establishing and maintaining small groves of conifers can help resident whitetails ride out a difficult winter.

Again, the best method for doing this is to consult with a forester or habitat specialist to develop a plan. Though forestry projects require a long-term commitment, they're extremely beneficial to deer and highly satisfying to the folks lucky enough to participate in the process.

Finally, as you set up your property for hunting, make sure your stand/blind locations — as well as access and exit routes — are well thought out. Many newbies to the North Woods think whitetails will be pushovers because they don't encounter many humans. Actually, the opposite is true. Think about it. In farm country or suburbia, deer encounter people daily and develop a tolerance for human scent and intrusion. Big-woods deer, however, rarely get a whiff of man, and trust me, they aren't tolerant. Take extreme care to not overhunt stands and blinds overlooking food plots and, if you really want long-term success, have a variety of ambush points off the plot. I'm convinced that the closer a mature buck gets to a food plot, the more cautious he becomes, and I have a much better chance of catching him with his guard down well off the food source.

Final Thoughts

I've found food plots to be effective and fun no matter where I've planted them, but for me, they have a special allure in the big woods. Perhaps it's because it takes some extra time and sweat to carve a plot out in the timber. Or is it because a big woods food plot most often doesn't have any competition and whitetails will literally be all over a plot of clover or brassicas in the big woods. I haven't answered those questions yet, but I know this: When an old monarch whitetail — a deer almost impossible to see in the big-woods environment — shows up at a food plot, it's a pretty special moment. 

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The WEED DOCTOR

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

GLYPHOSATE: An Indispensable Tool in Food Plots; Use Responsibly

I have been writing articles for *Whitetail News* since 1998, with most discussing herbicides and weed control. Almost all the articles mentioned or included discussions on glyphosate. Glyphosate is among the most commonly used herbicides in the United States by homeowners and commercial agriculture. Excellent generic glyphosate products are readily available, but most folks are familiar with the original proprietary glyphosate product: Roundup®. I guess glyphosate is a fixture in our society, which is a fairly bold statement regarding a herbicide. Admittedly, a segment of our society finds that statement unsettling. More on that later.

In 1970, Monsanto identified the weed-control properties of the glyphosate molecule. The company commercialized it in the United

States in 1974. Formulated glyphosate is water soluble and compatible with many other herbicides. As evidence, go to any homeowner retail outlet and see how many weed-control products are pre-mixed with glyphosate. In terms of toxicity, glyphosate is among the least toxic herbicides, although it can be an eye irritant.

Glyphosate is primarily absorbed through plant leaves and readily translocated by the vascular system, accumulating in aerial and below-ground growing points. Growth ceases when an amino acid essential for photosynthesis is inhibited, which explains why symptoms are slow to develop. The systemic nature of glyphosate is a unique characteristic of the herbicide, providing opportunities to control perennial weeds. In fact, for the first 15 years of commercialization, glyphosate was primarily sold for perennial weed control; forestry, non-cropland, orchard crops and utility right-of-ways. Glyphosate is still the foundation for weed control in these areas.

Glyphosate is a phosphorous-based molecule and is readily bound to soil particles, rendering it inactive as a herbicide. The lack of soil activity adds tremendous versatility to glyphosate. In food plots, glyphosate can be applied at recommended rates to seedbeds to kill emerged weeds immediately before seeding forages, and the herbicide will not affect the planting. The critical qualifier is “at recommended rates.” As in any biological system, there are exceptions. See the side-



It's widely accepted that glyphosate has no soil residual properties. However, there are exceptions. In Spring 2007, I drove home for lunch. As I entered the neighborhood, I met a work crew from a lawn-maintenance business leaving the area. At an intersection, I found a new 2-1/2-gallon container of generic glyphosate lying in the grass beside the road. It had probably fallen off the workers' trailer while they traveled too fast through a turn. The herbicide jug was cracked, and about one gallon of glyphosate concentrate had leaked. The picture here shows that after six years (2013), there was no vegetation growing in the spot where the non-diluted glyphosate leaked. How could that be if glyphosate has no soil residual properties? Well, glyphosate (and probably almost any herbicide) has soil residual weed-control properties if the rate is high enough. Assuming one gallon of glyphosate concentrate leaked and the dead spot is about three feet in diameter, the estimated rate of glyphosate in the dead spot is 6,166 gal./A. A reasonable rate of glyphosate used in food plots is .5 gal./A. Using these assumptions, the estimated rate of glyphosate in the spill site was more than 12,000 times the normal use rate. No wonder glyphosate was still killing weeds in the spill site after six years.

bar for a unique exception I witnessed.

In the 1990s, plant-breeding techniques advanced enough to allow specific genes from one organism to be introduced into the genome of crop plants. This statement is a gross simplification of a tedious and technically intense process. These molecular techniques are part of the array of tools available to plant breeders and are limited to large corporations because of expense. The products of these advanced plant-breeding techniques are crop varieties with introduced resistance to glyphosate. Glyphosate resistance was initially introduced into varieties of major crops, including soybeans, corn and cotton. These advanced varieties are commonly called Roundup-ready. The degree of resistance of Roundup-ready varieties to direct applications of glyphosate is amazing, and after years, I continue to marvel at this phenomenon. Currently, additional resistance to other broad-spectrum herbicides is available, but still only in major crops. Products of these advanced breeding techniques are now considered mainstream in agriculture, and it started in an effort to further capture the weed-control benefits of glyphosate.

Glyphosate is easy to use and consistent. Glyphosate concentrate can be mixed with water to make a 1 to 2 percent solution that will control most weed infestations. For a 25-gallon sprayer, this means .25 to .5 gallons of glyphosate concentrate followed by enough water to make 25 gallons of mixed spray solution. Use the 1 percent rate for annual weeds and the 2 percent rate for perennial weeds. Adjuvants are optional, although many users routinely add ammonium sulfate to negate hardwater antagonizing glyphosate in the spray tank. Despite this simplicity, glyphosate consistently controls most weeds. There are exceptions. Some plants are naturally tolerant of glyphosate, and others (notably pigweeds) were once controlled by glyphosate but developed resistance because of herbicide overuse and natural selection.

Although glyphosate is considered to be non-selective, it can be selectively applied to weeds. Herbicide wipers use wicking materials containing glyphosate to wipe herbicide on weeds taller than the crop. Another unique application technique is to paint glyphosate concentrate on the freshly cut stump of saplings. This technique is useful during maintenance of hunting land. A variation of this technique is to peel the bark of saplings with a hatchet and spray a small amount of glyphosate concentrate into the fresh cut. These are examples of the versatility of glyphosate, and not many herbicides have such a wide use pattern.

Glyphosate is an indispensable tool for agriculture, homeowners and food plot managers. I say that without hesitation. However, a segment of our society views glyphosate with contempt. Some of these views are based on distrust of corporate America, and others are based on fears of the so-called genetically manipulated organism crops (that is, Roundup-ready). Many of these concerns are emotionally charged and not based on credible science. Many of the fake-science claims related to glyphosate and genetically manipulated organism crops have been disproven by panels of respected, non-biased scientific experts. However, we must understand that knowledge is an unending quest, and although glyphosate is a well-studied herbicide, our understanding of Glyphosate or any other herbicide is incomplete.

This leads me to a conclusion that's technically based and philosophical. Glyphosate remains a registered herbicide and offers many specialized benefits. Like any other registered pesticide, use glyphosate ethically and safely with a clear conscience. 

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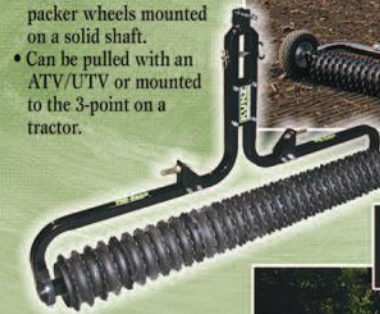
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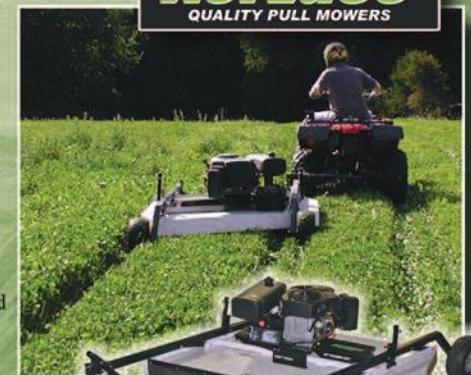
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Late-Season Hunting Over Winter-Greens Presents Challenges — and Big Rewards

By Matt Harper

Photos by the Author



At times, I sincerely question my intelligence when I consider some decisions I've made that somehow seemed like good ideas at the time. This is especially true when I repeat a bad choice with the expectation of achieving a different result. Seems like I heard somewhere that was the definition of stupidity or something like that. Now, don't mistake this for some attempt at self-deprecating charm or a cute self-reproaching way to endear myself to the reader. Unfortunately, I really make some pretty dumb decisions.

For example, why would I continually think that just getting a "good run for it" would get me through a mud hole I get stuck in almost every time? Why do I look at a precariously stacked load of hay in the back of my truck and think, "It'll ride?" And why would I think it's a great idea to wait until the day before my wife's birthday or our anniversary to figure out what to buy her? Apparently one of those giant cards at a gas station doesn't really show her how much I love her —



in her mind, anyway.

Several years ago, I was visiting with a work colleague on a cold late-December afternoon, and he asked what I planned to do during the weekend. I said, "If I ever get off the phone with you, I am going to take my daughter out to do some deer hunting."

"Isn't it like 10 below there?" he asked. "You are going to take your 8-year-old daughter out in the snow and cold to sit in a box to try and shoot a deer?"

"Well, yeah," I replied. "I'll put her insulated, pink Barbie coveralls on her, plop her on the plastic toboggan (that's a sled, not a hat) and drag her about a mile to the shooting house. Nothin' to it."

Sound like a reasonable, well-thought-out decision? Admittedly, about halfway to the stand — exhausted, pouring sweat despite the freezing temperatures and legs burning from the knee-deep snow — I questioned myself. But only a few moments after getting in the shooting house and letting the little propane heater knock the chill off a bit, my daughter peeked over the windowsill and said, "Daddy, I see one."

The pure excitement in her eyes swept away any thoughts of our little adventure being a bad decision. We didn't stay long that night, as even our little heater couldn't keep the subzero temperatures at bay, but we saw several deer and shared an experience that might as well have been an epic expedition to the North Pole in my daughter's eyes. It's a wonderful memory we will share all our lives, and creating those special memories is never a bad idea.

Winter-Greens

Several years ago, a new type of forage burst onto the food plot scene, and it was unlike any others. They were called brassicas, and they were all the rage. Brassicas were planted in later summer or early fall, much like oats or wheat, but deer didn't eat them when they started growing. Instead, the plants grew tall, producing tons of leafy forage, and some varieties grew tubers beneath and just above the soil's surface.

When the weather turned cold, deer congregated at brassica fields, ravenously eating forage and root. In snow country, the green leaves stood on heavy stalks in stark contrast above the white surface. Deer would plow through the snow, eating leaf and tuber, creating huge wallowed-out areas that resembled a winter hay lot for cattle. Of course, brassicas were not new. In fact, Whitetail Institute has been promoting brassicas as far back as the early 1990's as a component of No-Plow and varieties such as turnips and kale had been planted in gardens for years, and certain brassicas had been seeded in pastures and fields as forage for domestic livestock for years.

But as more and more hunters came to realize the many benefits of food plots, for most, the term brassica was brand new. Simply using the word brassicas and bundling them into one generic category is akin to saying all legume varieties are the same. There is great diversity in the varieties and forage types lumped into the brassica category.

Winter-Greens provides an extremely attractive food source from both the leaf and the root

So, it would make sense that brassica-blend food plot products are also diverse.

Whitetail Institute's development of its Winter-Greens product actually began long before it was introduced. Like all Whitetail Institute products, a mountain of research went into determining the exact blend of specific forage varieties that performed the best in production and deer usage. Because of the extraordinary amount of varieties, the developmental phase required that an extremely large number of test plots be planted. Five main research centers in Iowa, Tennessee, New York, Pennsylvania and Alabama grew large checkerboard-style test plots containing more than 100 varieties. The results of those studies led to experimental blends that were tested at those facilities and sent to dozens of certified field test locations throughout the country.

Again, because of the sheer number of varieties to test, research continued for several years until the ideal blend was identified. When Winter-Greens was eventually introduced, feedback to the Whitetail Institute indicated what the Whitetail Institute already knew, it was the best brassica product customers had ever tried based for tonnage and attractiveness. I was not surprised, as I was blessed to be one of those early testers and knew firsthand the depth and breadth of the project. For me, Winter-Greens opened up a new hunting experience

that went beyond the opportunity of shooting a trophy deer.

Big Bucks

There's no doubt that hunting the rut can be one of the most exciting deer hunting experiences. Driven by a lust to procreate, bucks roam the county in daylight, giving you a glimpse at animals rarely seen other than on trail cameras. If you have a hot doe in your area, it can be magical. On the other hand, the rut is unpredictable, and you can sit for hours and get skunked. Or if you see a buck, he might be far away at some random place where you would have never dreamed of hanging a stand. Post-rut hunting is different and is often considered more difficult and less exciting. However, when you prepare for it correctly — including having an attractive food source — post-rut hunting can be equal to if not more productive than the rut.

Late-season hunting dates vary from state to state, but in Iowa, the late season is the end of December through the first few days of January. That time of year can produce some of the most brutal, bone-chilling temperatures, with or without snow. Deer need an energy-rich food source to fuel their bodies against the elements. Bucks are in desperate need of this type of food as they try to regain

body weight lost during grueling weeks of rutting. In fact, mature bucks are far more likely to succumb to harsh winter weather because of their body condition, so having a good food supply can save some older bucks from the harshest of winters.

The leaves and tubers of Winter-Greens provide these nutritional needs, as they are good energy sources and provide other vital nutrients. Winter-Greens is incredibly attractive, high in nutrients and the leaves and tubers are available to deer even under heavy snow, which makes a Winter-Greens food plot ideal for providing nutrition and hunting during winter.

I cannot say for sure, but I'd wager I've seen and harvested almost as many mature bucks during late season as I have during the rut. Other factors contribute to late-season hunting success, but by far the most important is having the right food source. Bucks must eat, and their urge to fill their bellies during the post-rut is almost as powerful as their desire to breed during the rut. That need brings mature bucks out of secluded haunts to feed during daylight.

The colder the weather and the more snow, the more likely this will happen. I have had mature bucks come to plots during the early afternoon, even ahead of does and young bucks, when temperatures are bitterly cold. Granted, hunting pressure can influence the frequency of daytime feeding by mature bucks, but it has less impact during that period than during the early season. Bucks simply have to eat. I have seen more total deer during the late season than during any



Deer need an energy-rich food source during bitter late-season weather, and Winter-Greens fits the bill. The author wrote, "My daughter, Abby, with her first deer. She made a perfect 140-yard shot across a Winter-Greens plot right after she finished off a bag of chips and a thermos of hot chocolate."

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other, including more bucks and a big part of the reason is because I have good late-season food like Winter-Greens.

Hunting tip: Late season hunting over a Winter-Greens plot is much better in the afternoon. Mature bucks and all deer that have been bedded all day in the bitter cold have to eat and they are very likely to show up during legal shooting hours. Several very successful hunters have said afternoon is the only time to hunt a Winter-Greens plot in the late season. Sleep in because the deer will likely be headed to bed themselves.

The Experience

Although the opportunity to shoot a big buck is one reason why I like hunting the late season, it's not the only factor. The rut, with the possibility of sudden adrenaline rushes, has an allure, but late-season hunting over a good food plot has a charm of its own. First is the adversity of the environment. Hunting at zero or colder with feet of snow on the ground presents unique challenges — namely not freezing to death. But in that challenge you can find a sense of accomplishment that adds to the overall experience.

When temperatures dip to “you-have-to-be-kidding-me” levels, I don my mad trapper hat and beaver mittens (yes, I actually have beaver mittens) and trudge to the stand, relishing that my breath forms icicles on my mustache. Call it a Jeremiah Johnson complex, or just call it crazy, but it gives me a sense of fulfillment. After all, most people wouldn't wander through the icy woods, across frozen creeks and snow-laden fields. But doing so affords me experiences that only occur in those conditions.

A landscape of gleaming, diamond-encrusted snow blankets the ground and even hangs on big oak tree limbs. A brilliant red cardinal contrasts against the icy bank of a frozen pond. Turkeys in huge flocks scratch to find hidden food sources out in a food plot, and every type of critter is attracted to the area for food the plot provides — or the chance to eat what's eating at the plot. And of course, there are deer. Other times during the season, you might see quite a few deer, but it will almost always pale in comparison to the amount you will see at a food plot in cold weather. With a good food plot, every deer on the property will likely visit the area at some point — including deer from neighboring properties. As the afternoon wears on, deer will pour out in droves from all angles and sides of the plot. Sometimes, it becomes challenging just to keep track of newcomers. Unlike during the mad scramble of the rut, you can take your time and enjoy watching deer. You can take hundreds of photographs, take herd inventories and collect data, or simply sit and enjoy the experience.

Without question, the thing I like the most about hunting the late season is taking my children. When you get past the cold weather, a hunt can be ideal, and the cold weather, if you're properly prepared, can add to the sense of adventure. But the thing that makes it perfect



The weather might be frigid, but the late-season hunting over Winter-Greens can be unforgettable. The author wrote, “My daughter, Emma, has taken some good bucks, always over late-season plots with her muzzleloader. The long cold sits are worth it, knowing deer WILL show up on the Winter-Greens plots nearly every night.”

for children is you see enough deer to keep their attention and excite them to come back. I started taking my daughters when they were about six. At first, we took backpacks full of chips, coloring books and juice boxes, and because we hunted from shooting blinds, they could enjoy those things and still see deer. I taught them how to read deer behavior, understand deer interaction, age bucks, and where, what, when and how to shoot deer. I would put my girls against most any man in terms of accurately aging bucks. They are amazing at it. But beyond the hunting, it was the fact that we were together, with no distractions to cloud the experience. Our topics of conversations were vast and ranged from SpongeBob episodes when they were young to boys when they got older. I was better equipped to talk about SpongeBob.

Conclusion

Hunting over a food plot in the late season can be rewarding for many reasons. As much as I love the experience of hunting whitetails in the rut, the experiences I've had while hunting the late season tips the scale in its favor. The memories I've made and stored are some of my most cherished, and they were created by cold winter afternoons sitting over Winter-Greens. 🔥

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

David S. – Wisconsin

I have been a Whitetail Institute customer for four years now. I cannot begin to describe how impressed I have been with their products. My property consists of 35 acres. It is a small parcel of woods in the middle of about 400 acres of woods surrounded by large agricultural fields. The first year that I hunted my property I saw about five deer during the entire bow and gun season. After that first year, I decided to invest in Whitetail Institute products. My first food plot that I planted was Pure Attraction. If I had not seen the results for myself I would not have believed it. I planted a small plot about 1/3 acre in size, however, I was seeing almost 6 to 10 deer every time I hunted the plot. I could not believe the difference that a 1/3-acre plot made in one year! Needless to say, I was immediately convinced of the quality of Whitetail Institute and of the importance of food plots.

I have been planting Whitetail Institute products ever since. I have harvested my first bow buck over Whitetail Institute products, and I have harvested two bucks and five does. I have seen probably more than 100 deer during that time frame. I harvested my biggest buck to date last fall while he was eating in a 1/2-acre plot of Whitetail Oats Plus. Enclosed is a photo of him. He scores right at 160 inches. I cannot say enough about this product. I planted it for the first time last fall, and I could not believe the results. Every time I hunted over this plot, I would have a parade of deer going through it. I have never seen so many deer in my life! In the middle of October, this big 9-point stepped out and gave me a good shot.

I believe that Whitetail Institute products and the amount of success stories speak for themselves. Thanks, Whitetail Institute, for your amazing products.



Bill Baxter – Nebraska

New state record.

We have continued to have great results with Whitetail Institute products and plant more plots with them every year. Last year, we only planted Whitetail Institute products in our more than 30 food plots and again had amazing results! Specifically, we've used Imperial Whitetail Clover, Double Cross (now Vision) and Winter-Greens, and we have unbelievable food plots.

I wanted to share the best success we have had so far with Whitetail Institute products. My friend, Ed Walsh, of Raleigh, North Carolina harvested the new Nebraska state-record whitetail buck taken with a crossbow at our farm. The buck grew up feeding on Double Cross. He scored 177-6/8! Enclosed is a picture of Ed and the deer.

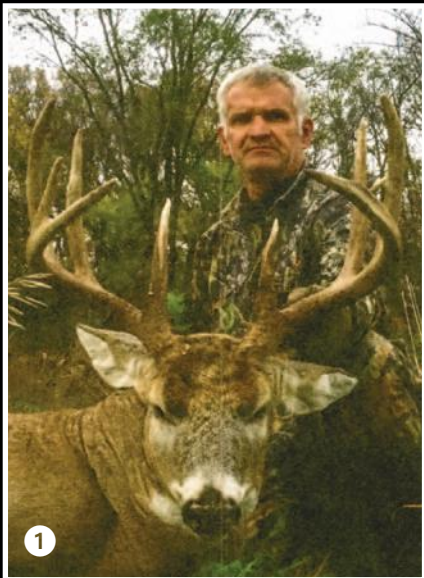
We will continue to plant all our plots on our 400 acres in Whitetail Institute products, as well as continue our focus on bringing kids into the outdoors with our youth deer hunts. Keep up the great work, Whitetail Institute, and thanks again for your contribution to our continued success with growing and harvesting big whitetail deer!



Anders Blixt – Ohio

I planted 6 acres of Tall Tine Tubers and Whitetail Oats Plus, and it paid off big time for me in southern Ohio. I shot this 163-inch main frame 9-point with my bow in early November last year. There were tons of deer using this food plot, and he was the biggest buck on the farm. I saw him on the first day of my hunt, and shot him the morning of the second day as he was leaving the food plot and headed back to the bedding area. The Whitetail Institute food plots were a huge part of making my season a success. We will be putting these in again next year! And thank you, Whitetail Institute, for the exceptional customer support! I called several times and sent emails. The Whitetail Institute team helped us put together a solid food source for the deer. Thanks!

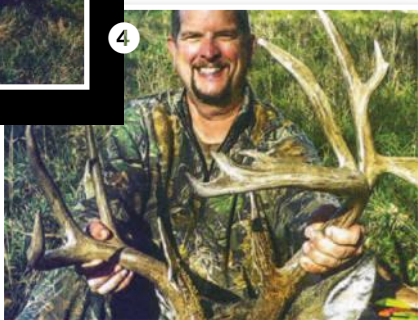




Dan Foss - Iowa

Since I started using Whitetail Institute products several years ago, the deer have seemed to be more attracted to my properties. I started with Imperial Whitetail Clover and a small plot of Winter-Greens. It was obvious after the first frost that the half-acre plot of Winter-Greens was not near enough. The deer had completely devoured the 15 inches of green vegetation in no time. Within two years' after planting the clover, we started noticing more and bigger deer in the area. I have also planted PowerPlant in several areas. I've learned that if I leave it through the winter, the deer

love to use it as bedding areas. Before using Whitetail Institute products, we rarely saw a deer that measured more than 140 inches. Since then we have harvested seven deer that score more than 150. Plus, we have seen deer in the 200-inch range. This year I harvested 2 bucks 15 days apart from the same tree stand. The first measured 165 inches and weighed 300 pounds. (photo 1) The second measured 178 inches. (photo 2) Since then, I have gotten pictures of a non-typical in the same area that will go 200



inches. I'm amazed every year to watch how the deer will dig through the snow to get to the Winter-Greens bulbs and the Imperial Whitetail Clover. This has helped hold the deer on the farm so we can collect the dropped antlers in the spring. Also enclosed are pictures (photos 3 and 4) of a few of the other bucks taken off our plots. I'm a loyal fan of Whitetail Institute products and won't use anything else.

Jason Say - Pennsylvania



I live and hunt in northwest Pennsylvania and have been planting Whitetail Institute food plots for the past eight years. We have watched our property improve more with every season. This year, I was able to harvest my biggest buck ever, a 154-inch stud. I have never had a deer more patterned than this buck. We had trail cam photos of him almost every evening in a Whitetail Institute Pure Attraction food plot for three weeks before season (see one of these photos). We finally got the right wind on the fourth day of the Pennsylvania archery season, we went in and made a perfect shot at 37 yards as he was gorging himself on the Whitetail Institute food plot! Thanks, Whitetail Institute, for making awesome products. 



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**

Whitetail Oats Plus

Is This the Most Versatile Whitetail Institute Annual Ever?

By William Cousins

Attracting deer during hunting season — that's the No. 1 reason folks plant fall food plots. There's no question that Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus is outstanding at that because of its high sugar content. Consider, though, that Whitetail Oats Plus offers a wide range of potential benefits beyond just attracting deer. These tips will help you take advantage of its versatility.

Whitetail Oats Plus Attracts and Holds Deer

The backbone of Whitetail Oats Plus is Whitetail Oats. The Plus component is a small amount of triticale and winter wheat, which have been included to boost attraction by offering deer multiple food options within the same plot and further boost winter hardiness.

Whitetail Oats is an oat variety the Whitetail Institute first heard about several years ago from one of its worldwide agriculture contacts — a university that was conducting research comparing how well various oat varieties performed as grain producers. According to the Whitetail Institute's source, the university researchers had to remove the oat variety from the grain production tests because deer were browsing it so heavily.

Although the university researchers viewed the oat variety's incredible attractiveness to deer as a problem in their grain production trials,



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the Whitetail Institute was, for obvious reasons, interested in exploring the variety's potential as a whitetail forage. The Institute's initial tests included evaluating the variety's attractiveness to deer, how well it grew in various climates and other performance characteristics related to use in food plots. Those tests confirmed what the Institute's contact had said: The oat variety was high in sugar and extremely attractive to whitetails. The tests also showed the variety is well suited to a broad range of climates, and that it's winter hardy — another excellent characteristic for any plant being considered for use in food plots.

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

The Broad Versatility of Whitetail Oats Plus

Whitetail Oats Plus is one of the Whitetail Institute's most popular fall annuals to attract deer during fall. As more Whitetail Institute customers are discovering, though, Whitetail Oats Plus can provide a variety of other benefits.

Fastest green-up possible: All Whitetail Institute food plot seed components are evaluated for rapid emergence and seedling vigor. Whitetail Oats Plus germinates and emerges extremely quickly, and when planted as a nurse crop with a perennial in fall, it can help your fall-planted perennial food plot green up quickly and start attracting deer as soon after planting as possible.

Additional drought protection: Planting a nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus with perennials in fall is a great way to hedge your bets against the chance that Mother Nature will turn off the rain in late summer or early fall. To understand why that's true, you need to know the purpose of Whitetail Institute Rainbond seed coating and how it works.

Perennials are at their most vulnerable to fluctuations in soil moisture when their roots are still tiny, right after they germinate. The Whitetail Institute coats its perennial seeds to maximize seedling survivability by keeping the seeds from germinating on comparatively small amounts of moisture (in some cases, even just with heavy dew) when there isn't sufficient moisture in the soil to sustain the seedling. When it rains and the soil holds sufficient moisture, the moisture penetrates the seed coating, the seed germinates and the seedling starts to grow. Because Whitetail Oats Plus can germinate and survive with substantially less soil moisture than perennials, planting them as a nurse crop with fall-planted perennials can ensure that you'll have a robust, highly attractive food plot right away, even if weather conditions are unusually dry.

Sustained attraction: Whitetail Oats Plus doesn't just provide benefits during the first month or two after planting them with a peren-



How to Plant A Nurse Crop of Whitetail Oats Plus with Fall-Planted Perennials

Each Whitetail Institute food plot product comes with seedbed-preparation and planting instructions on the bag. You can also find them at whitetailinstitute.com. Here's how to adjust the instructions if you'll be using Whitetail Oats Plus as a nurse crop with your fall-planted perennials:

Step 1: Have your soil tested by the Whitetail Institute's soil-testing laboratory or other qualified soil-testing lab. Have the lab test the soil for establishment of the perennial you'll be planting, not Whitetail Oats Plus. Add any lime recommended in your soil-test report (or follow the general lime recommendations on the back of the bags). Disk or till the lime thoroughly into the top few inches of the seedbed.

Step 2: When your fall planting dates arrive, start the planting process by disking or tilling the seedbed.

Step 3: When the seedbed has been disked or tilled, add fertil-

izer and Whitetail Oats Plus seed as follows: Add the fertilizer recommended in the soil-test report (or, if you didn't do a laboratory soil test, the default fertilizer recommendations shown on the back of the perennial product bag). Broadcast the Whitetail Oats Plus seed at a rate of 25 to 40 pounds per acre (less than half the recommended rate for planting Whitetail Oats Plus by itself).

Step 4: After you have added the fertilizer and Whitetail Oats Plus to the seedbed, drag the plot to lightly cover the fertilizer and Whitetail Oats Plus seed no more than one inch deep. Do not disk or till the Whitetail Oats Plus seed into the soil.

Step 5: When you have lightly covered the fertilizer and Whitetail Oats Plus seed, broadcast the perennial seed at the full seeding rate shown on the front of the bag. Do not drag the plot after putting out the perennial seed. The perennial seed should stay on top of the seedbed.

nial in fall. They continue to boost attraction by adding variety to the stand, and as we'll discuss next, they can also be used to benefit turkeys and other wildlife the next spring.

Creating a "soft edge" of Whitetail Oats Plus around your perennial food plots: So far, we've been discussing planting Whitetail Oats Plus as a nurse crop in a seedbed with a fall-planted perennial. Let's discuss an additional use for Whitetail Oats Plus that shows its exceptional versatility.

Through the years, I've found that planting a soft edge of Whitetail Oats Plus just outside the border of my fall perennial plots provides a huge benefit to a host of wildlife as a food source and cover. The soft edge creates excellent nesting habitat for turkeys and other upland birds, as well as a great hiding place for fawns and turkey poults. Planting a soft edge with Whitetail Oats Plus has been great for the wildlife that live near and use my food plots. I believe it has significantly improved the quantity and quality of animals in the area. I'm confident you will experience the same kind of results by including a soft edge around your food plots.

Planting a soft edge of Whitetail Oats Plus around a food plot differs from planting it as a nurse crop in a seedbed with a fall-planted perennial in three ways:

First, like any solo planting of Whitetail Oats Plus, use the full seeding rate of 90 pounds per acre when planting the soft edge instead of the 25 to 40 pounds per acre you'd use when planting the oats as a nurse crop.

Second, if possible, fertilize the soft edge again about 30 to 45 days after planting with 100 pounds of 34-0-0 or equivalent high-nitrogen fertilizer per acre, as suggested in the planting instructions for Whitetail Oats Plus on the back of the bags. This follow-up fertilization is not needed when Whitetail Oats Plus is planted as a nurse crop with Whitetail Institute perennial legumes because the legumes will produce enough nitrogen for themselves and the nurse crop.

Third, let the soft edge continue to grow around the food plot through late spring and early summer to provide cover and nesting opportunities around the food plot. However, be sure you follow the Whitetail Institute's recommended maintenance guidelines for the food plot itself. A nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus should be removed as part of normal spring maintenance of the perennial with which it was planted by mowing in late spring and, if necessary, to control weeds and grass by spraying. (Note: Don't mow when conditions are excessively hot or droughty. You can find the forage maintenance instructions for each Whitetail Institute perennial on the back of the product bags and also at whitetailinstitute.com.)

As with all Whitetail Institute forage products, the components and their ratios in Whitetail Oats Plus have been developed and tested during real-world conditions across the United States to ensure that Whitetail Oats Plus is the best the Institute could make it. Whitetail Oats Plus is high in sugar and exceptionally attractive to deer. It's also winter-hardy, easy to plant, establishes quickly and begins attracting deer right away. Its cold tolerance lets it continue to attract deer longer into winter.

Whitetail Oats Plus is designed to thrive in a wide range of soil types, from slightly sandy to heavy bottomland. One 45-pound bag of Whitetail Oats Plus will plant up to ½ acre.

For more information about Whitetail Oats Plus or to order, visit whitetailinstitute.com, or call the Whitetail Institute at (800) 688-3030. 



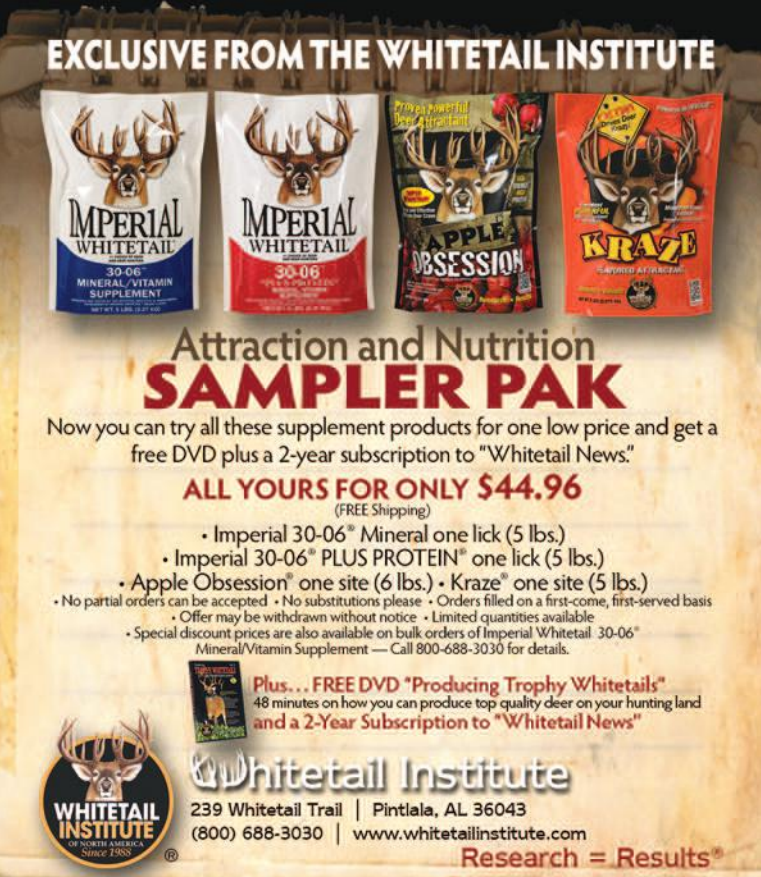
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When Your Neighbor Plants Corn:

WHAT'S THE FUSS ABOUT?

By Craig Dougherty

If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times. "The neighbor plants tons of corn, so he has all the deer." My response: "Only if you let him."

Let's face it, we're dealing with the time-honored tradition of landowners competing with each other to have the best hunting property. Often, it's a friendly rivalry, but sadly, it occasionally turns into a war. As wildlife consultants, my son and I spend more time than we would like to admit counseling clients through a "corn crisis" when their neighbor plants corn.

Corn: Not All It's Cracked Up to Be

For starters, you should know a few things about planting corn. First, not all ground will grow corn. Some soils and climates, such as Iowa, are made for corn, and others — think Maine — not so much. Also, you need relatively large expanses to grow corn. Corn planted in food-plot-sized plots often fails. And, of course, corn planting goes much easier with serious planting equipment. Ever watch a farmer put in 50 acres of corn? Chances are the equipment was some major-league stuff. Also, corn can be quite costly to grow — almost double the cost of green plots in many areas.

Further, corn is not attractive to deer until it ripens. If your neighbor harvests corn, it might be in a silo before deer pattern it. In addition, small to medium patches of corn seldom provide adequate food and cover to anchor deer in one location, despite the hype. The bed-and-breakfast concept is more myth than reality, as only the largest expanses of corn anchor appreciable numbers of deer. Finally, deer can quickly overbrowse corn. They work it when the tender green shoots emerge from the seed and often hit it again in the silk stage. Either can quickly wipe out a corn crop.

Is Planting Corn a No-No?

Well, not really. If you already have a solid green-plot program, have plenty of ground and plenty of money, and live in an area where corn thrives, you might want to plant a few acres of corn to experiment. We plant a few acres of corn each year to watch how deer interact



with it and the other foods we plant. More than once, we've marveled as deer walk through a \$500 corn planting to feed in a \$60 green plot. Do deer use it? Yes. There isn't a deer alive that won't eat corn. But can green plots outdraw corn? You bet, and so can yours. We only started to plant corn after we had a well-established food-plot program and extra ground to play with. This is one of our first rules of deer property management: Cover your green-plot bases before fooling with corn or anything that resembles a crop. Multiple small food plots go a long way toward helping create a hunting bonanza, but a large field planted in corn is little more than dirt most of the year.

If Your Neighbor Plants Corn

Before you get worked up about the neighbor planting corn, you must understand why he plants it. If he plants it to harvest for market, chances are the ears will be combined before the rut starts ramping up. The same goes for corn that will be turned into livestock feed. It's there one weekend and in the silo the next. The cornfield you were worked up about becomes a 5-acre mud flat. You have no worries unless the harvest is postponed until late fall or even winter.

If your neighbor grows corn to attract deer, keep a few things in mind. First, deer like variety in their diet. They move when they feed, sampling anything they can fit in their mouths. Just when the neighbor's corn is ready, so are apples, persimmons, acorns, beechnuts and many other foods on which deer thrive. Did I mention the green plots you planted? Deer will be working them, too.

Second, corn plantings are often large square or rectangular affairs. These shapes are often not easy to hunt. I can count on one hand the number of good bucks we have shot at expansive fields (especially with a bow). In 30-plus years of hunting, almost all the good bucks we have taken were shot at small, irregular-shaped plots or fingers or corners, or some other feature that tractors and corn planting equipment hate. Savvy hunters plant lots of irregular-shaped plots. Your neighbor might plant corn, but that does not always translate into

good hunting, especially when it comes to older deer.

Speaking of hunting, deer don't like hunting pressure, and no cornfield can take excessive hunting pressure. Spreading multiple green plots throughout a hunting property is vastly superior to planting a large cornfield (corn is best planted in large tracts) for keeping hunting pressure to a minimum. Nothing shuts deer down and moves them out of an area (including a food source) like too much pressure.

Going Green

Your best defense against a hunting neighbor who plants acres of corn is to go on the offensive with a diversified green-plot program. Green plots can feed deer 24-7 year-round and offer many hunting advantages.

A well-established plot of Imperial Whitetail Clover greens up in early spring. Our clover plots are covered with deer the moment winter's grip begins to ease. If they were planted in corn, they would not be feeding deer until well into fall. If your ground or climate gets hot and dry, a mixture containing some alfalfa or chicory lets you supplement your clover with a perennial that will perform well when the cool-loving clover takes a warm-weather rest. Alfa-Rack Plus and Fusion can keep feeding deer when you have been dry for an extended period of time. A well-managed property will have plenty of perennial plots to take care of deer when they need it most. It provides excellent nutrition and gets them accustomed to regularly working the plots on your property. Best, perennials will be there when your deer need them, year after year.

Of late, fall annual plots have increased in popularity, and for good reason. Nothing beats a nice fall green plot for competing with the neighbor's corn. A tender, young green plot that peaks in the middle of deer season is a thing of beauty, especially when it's covered with deer. Planted in late summer to early fall, they are at peak performance when you will be hunting. Nothing attracts deer like a plot full of young, fresh greens. Here, you have many options to counter the corn planted down the road. One of our mainstays is Tall Tine Tubers, a member of the brassica family. It produces leafy green tops and bulbs that deer dig for months. Beets & Greens gives you the same option with a variety of plants. Winter-Greens is another outstanding option. Like all brassicas, the plants are cold-tolerant, and their sugar content increases as temperatures fall. The Whitetail Institute offers an extensive line of green-plot products for almost any condition you might encounter.

Good deer properties have food and cover available all season. When deer become accustomed to getting a good meal any time of day, any day of the year, they get conditioned or at least habituated to using locations or properties. That doesn't work with corn. In some cases, it's little more than a two-week wonder — a few months at best.

The Bottom Line

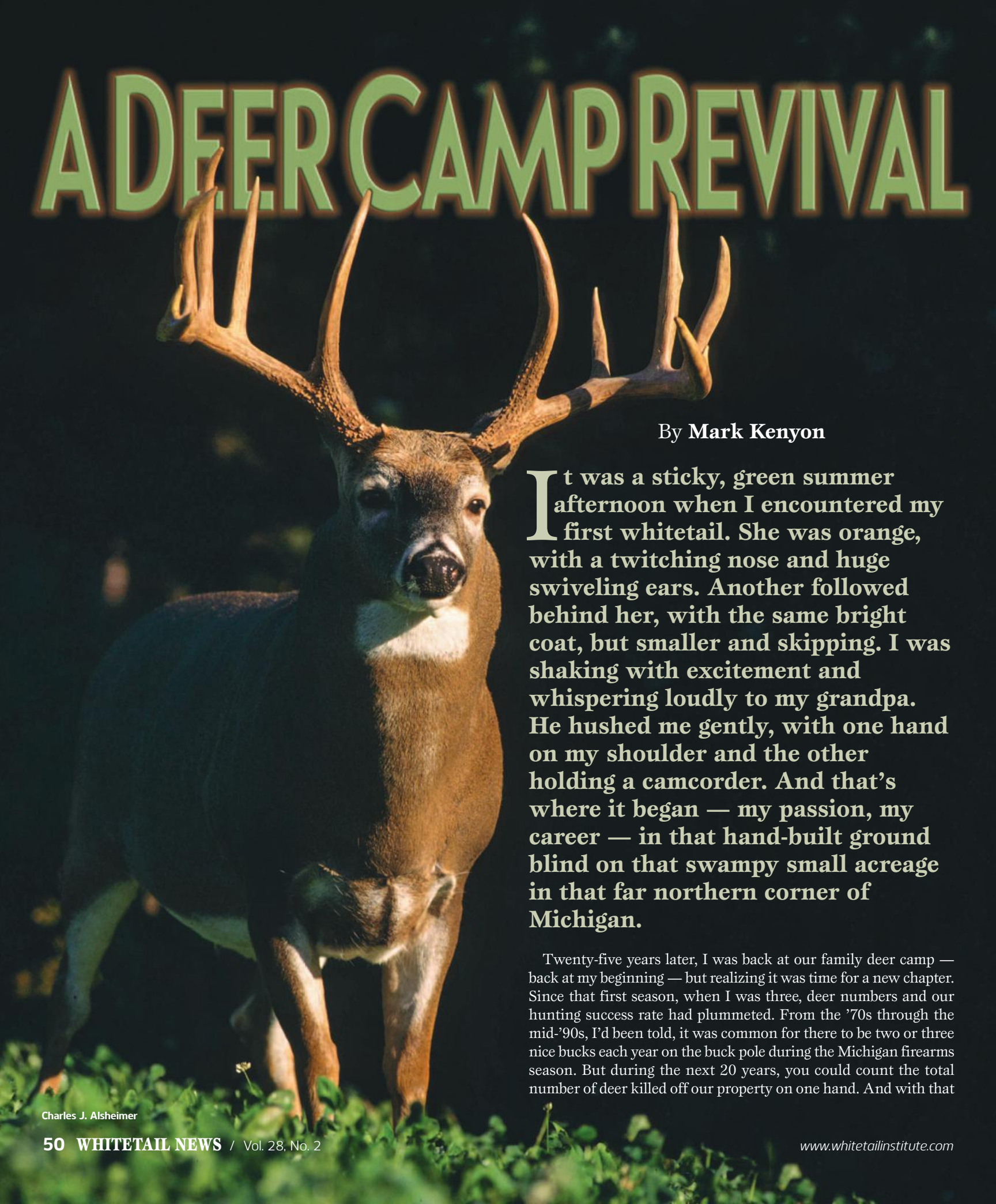
The bottom line for all deer-property management is having a healthy, happy population of huntable deer. Do everything possible to create the best deer property — one that works for deer and works the hunter. You should consider the health of deer all year and the health of the property. That's what being a good steward is all about. Of all the factors contributing to this equation, food is one of the most important. A solid green-plot program is vital to achieving this goal. A field or two of corn? Well, maybe not so much. 🍷



Charles J. Alsheimer

A DEER CAMP REVIVAL

By Mark Kenyon

A photograph of a whitetail deer with large antlers standing in a field. The deer is facing the camera, and its antlers are prominent. The background is a soft-focus field of green plants.

It was a sticky, green summer afternoon when I encountered my first whitetail. She was orange, with a twitching nose and huge swiveling ears. Another followed behind her, with the same bright coat, but smaller and skipping. I was shaking with excitement and whispering loudly to my grandpa. He hushed me gently, with one hand on my shoulder and the other holding a camcorder. And that's where it began — my passion, my career — in that hand-built ground blind on that swampy small acreage in that far northern corner of Michigan.

Twenty-five years later, I was back at our family deer camp — back at my beginning — but realizing it was time for a new chapter. Since that first season, when I was three, deer numbers and our hunting success rate had plummeted. From the '70s through the mid-'90s, I'd been told, it was common for there to be two or three nice bucks each year on the buck pole during the Michigan firearms season. But during the next 20 years, you could count the total number of deer killed off our property on one hand. And with that

Charles J. Alsheimer

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declining success rate came a decline in camp morale and attendance. In the early years, I remember upward of 10 hunters being at camp, eating good food and telling good stories. But now, our numbers had fallen to three or four at best. We needed to make a change. We needed a fresh start. We needed something to get excited about again. So I approached my dad and uncle with a plan.

The idea was to implement a series of modest habitat improvements during several years that would achieve two initial goals. The first would be to increase the number of deer spending time on our property, which would hopefully increase deer sightings during hunting season. At this point, the average hunt on the property ended with zero deer sightings. If we could improve that by even just one deer per hunt, we'd create a different hunting experience. The second, longer-term goal would be to eventually have a chance of encountering a mature buck on the property — something that hadn't happened in about 20 years. Those might sound like insignificant goals to some, but they would represent substantial steps forward for us, considering our starting point.

My family was on board, so we began the process by analyzing the property from a bird's eye view from a terrain and concept standpoint. I first considered what the property provided deer and what it didn't. Deer need food, water and security/cover. Unfortunately, our ground didn't provide all of those. The ground consisted mostly of swampy lowland timber, several large stands of mature conifer plantings (white pine and hemlock) and two old overgrown fields. Twenty years ago, those fields had provided edge, food and frequent deer sightings, but no longer. Now, the farm had little quality food but had abundant cover.

I knew food was the missing ingredient, not only on our property

but also on most of the adjacent ground, as this was big-woods country with little agriculture nearby. For a second opinion and other ideas, I brought in a friend who is a habitat consultant and he concurred. Food would be the most significant thing we could manipulate in the beginning. So, I set forth a multi-year game plan to implement food plots on our family hunting property.

This would be no easy feat. We had no tractors or big equipment. We had limited time to make the four-hour drive to the property, and the ground we were working with was sandy and acidic, with pH levels in the 4s. I knew we'd have to approach this with a slow-but-sure mindset. So for the first year, we simply worked with chainsaws. The initial step would be to work toward clearing our first 1/3-acre opening in one of the old fields. We spent several hot summer days sawing and dragging treetops, and when hunting season arrived three years ago, we had, for the first time in years, an open field and actual edge habitat. Although the scale of the improvement was tiny, the step forward it represented was exciting.

When we got back to work two years ago, our goals seemed a little bit closer. We cleared more stumps and trees, and that summer we made several trips to the property to apply herbicide and lime with hopes of slowly improving the soil pH. In late summer, we came back with my ATV and an 18-inch wide ATV disc plow to work up the soil and apply more lime and the necessary fertilizer. Finally, with a wish and a prayer, we seeded our first food plot. Given the acidity of the soil and a few tips from friends in similar situations, we decided to try buckwheat and Whitetail Oats Plus for our first planting. After finishing our work, we checked the radar again for rain, set a trail camera over the plot and headed home, not to return until hunting season.

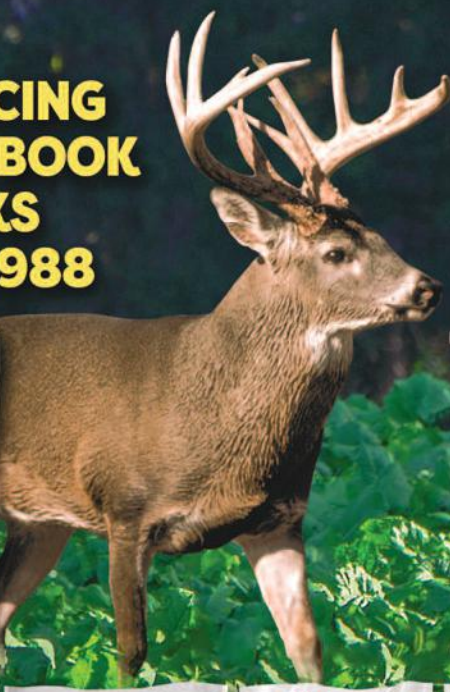


Mark Kenyon

Whitetail Institute products played a big role in the author's habitat-improvement work.

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



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When we finally returned, it was a revelation. Amidst the sea of pines, ferns and swamp, there was a beautiful, lush, green food plot — our first. It was opening evening, and after marveling at the success of our plot, I quietly shimmied up a nearby tree and settled in my climber. Unbelievably, a minute or two later, an explosion rocked the silence around me. A quick phone call gave me the news. My dad, who was just a few hundred yards away, had just killed his first buck at our hunting property in decades.

Later that evening, after recovering the buck and celebrating with cold beverages, the excitement continued to increase as we discussed the success of the plot and started checking the trail camera that had been on the green field. The emotion in the room went off the charts. To our disbelief, we'd captured trail camera photos of three mature bucks hitting the plot — including one with a drop tine. From having not seen a mature buck on the farm in 20 years to having pictures of three of them in one location in one season seemed like a miracle. In the second year of our project, my dad had one of his best hunts on the property, we'd captured our first mature bucks on a trail camera, and I saw more deer and more consistent deer activity than I'd experienced on our property in years.

Last year, our plan was to continue our focus on food, as that was still the limiting factor. Our food plot strategies were not profound, terribly large or particularly impressive when compared to what you might see on most heavily managed whitetail properties. But for us, any little improvement could make a big difference. My goal for the year was to triple the amount of food available by expanding the first food plot and adding two additional small plots in other parts of the grown-over fields. We started again with early-spring chainsaw work, which was then followed a few weeks later by a favor from a neighbor with a tractor, who offered to pull stumps for us. Later, my dad and another friend with a tractor came up to pull more stumps and clear the two new plots. At the end of the summer, my dad and uncle applied lime and fertilizer according to our soil test, and then again planted Whitetail Oats Plus and added some Imperial Whitetail Extreme.

When we returned in October, just like clockwork, we again had beautiful green food plots. And during the season, the results again showed we were making progress. During the opening weekend of the firearms season, I passed on a 2.5-year-old 8-pointer — making it two consecutive years I'd seen a 2.5-year-old buck, which was something that had never happened for me there before. And on trail cameras, we consistently saw doe activity, more young bucks than I'd ever seen and, again, several mature bucks.

As I write this, we're entering the fourth year, and I wonder what might be ahead. Our work has been slow and steady, but the results have been thrilling. We've killed one young buck, gotten a handful of mature-buck trail camera photos and have gone from averaging zero deer sightings per hunt to maybe two or four. That might not seem exciting for some folks in other areas or situations, but for us, it represents a new set of possibilities and hopes.

With not much time, money or equipment, we've shifted the trajectory of our family deer camp from one of decay to one of growth. We've changed the narrative from one of looking back on "the good old days" to one of looking forward to an optimistic future. And it's a future that I'm more excited about than ever, as I look forward to bringing my newborn son to deer camp for the first time. I know where we'll be sitting. 

FOOD PLOT FALLACIES, MISUNDERSTANDINGS... AND SOLUTIONS

By Tracy Breen

The Whitetail Institute has been around for more than three decades. Through the years, it has noticed a few consistent food plot mistakes. In some cases, hunters err when planting. In other cases, folks receive inaccurate information from friends or other “experts.” Some hunters don’t realize the importance of certain steps they must take when planting a food plot.

Steve Scott, vice president of the Whitetail Institute, is very familiar with those mistakes.

“Although we’ve been preaching it for 30 years, I think the one corner that is still most often cut is not doing a soil test,” he said. “Sometimes, people don’t do a test because they are in a hurry to plant or they simply don’t realize how important soil testing is. Soil testing is crucial. Every farmer who grows crops does a soil test. Every hunter who is planting a food plot should do one as well. Doing a soil test can be the difference between the best food plot someone could imagine, total failure or anywhere in between.”

Why a Soil Test

Soil differs in every part of the country, but in most places, soil pH is low. As a result, the soil needs lime added to allow growing plants to take up the nutrients from fertilizer.

“Without adding lime to low-pH soil, the plants growing in that soil



Charles J. Alshelmer

can't take advantage of all the fertilizer," Scott said. "If a person plants in soil with a pH of 5.0 and spends \$100 on fertilizer but doesn't do a soil test and doesn't use lime, the food plot will likely only be able to use about \$50 worth of the fertilizer. When the proper amount of lime is used, the soil and seed can take full advantage of the fertilizer because the pH is where it needs to be which is 6.5-7.0."

Having Whitetail Institute conduct a customized soil test provides a great benefit. If you know what you want to plant, the company can recommend the exact amount of lime and fertilizer that needs to be added for that seed.

"When someone fills out the paperwork for our soil test, they can choose up to two things they want to grow in their plots," Scott said. "When we send the results back to them, we tell them exactly how much lime and fertilizer they need for each type of plot."

When collecting soil for a soil sample, Scott said, don't just take soil from one spot in your plot. Take dirt from several areas, mix it together and put a sample from the mixed dirt in the bag and ship it.

"The pound of soil that is sent in for testing needs to represent the millions of pounds of soil that can be in a food plot," Scott said. "You want an accurate representation of the soil in the entire plot, so you want to send in soil from all over the field, not just from one spot." (A short video on how to do a soil test is available at whitetailinstitute.com)

Do I Really Need a Food Plot?

Some hunters believe they don't need food plots because their property is surrounded by agriculture. But when everyone around has corn and beans, a food plot is a great way to differentiate your property from all the rest and gives deer one more reason to spend more time on your property.

"First, farmers don't leave many crops behind anymore," Scott said. "Equipment is so advanced that not much grain is left on the ground. After crops are picked, deer obviously still need food, which is where a hunter's plot becomes extremely important. If I had property that was surrounded by agriculture, I would try to differentiate my property from the property around me to draw deer onto my land. An attractive green food plot is a great way to pull deer off of a piece of property that has nothing on it but corn and beans."

Here's another reason to plant food plots in areas with abundant agriculture:

"In spring and early summer, bucks will be growing their antlers and will need a high-protein food source," Scott said. "At this point, corn and beans haven't even been planted yet. And this is when Whitetail Institute perennials like Imperial Whitetail Clover and Fusion can fill a huge nutritional gap. These products are the first thing to green-up in the spring and provide high protein at a critical time when bucks are beginning to grow antlers and does are in their 3rd trimester of pregnancy."

If deer start using a property during spring and early summer, there is a good chance they will hang around in fall and winter if there's a good food source.

"There is no doubt having year-round food sources are extremely important, even when hunting and managing property in agricultural areas," Scott said. "Farmers often only think about crops and rightfully so. It's how they make their living. Hunters and wildlife in those areas can benefit from having food plots that are available

for deer all year."

All Seed Isn't the Same

Another misconception hunters have is that generic seeds will perform as well as the food plot products offered by Whitetail Institute. While farm crops are certainly utilized by deer and can have their place in a food plot system, Whitetail Institute food plot products are specifically designed to be planted as a food source for deer. That fact can make a big difference in performance.

"There are some good seed products available," Scott says. "The thing that separates Whitetail Institute products from others is that ours are scientifically developed specifically for food plots for deer. Generally speaking, the seeds you find in farm stores have also been specifically designed for something – either grazing by cattle or harvest. Cattle can digest tougher food than whitetails can, and plants that are designed to maximize harvest yields can be more difficult for deer to digest. Whitetail Institute products are built with forage varieties that are either developed or specially selected by our agronomists and other scientists for traits that make them ideal for use in a food plot. The most important trait is exceptional attractiveness to deer. Other traits we emphasize are rapid germination and growth, sustained palatability to deer as the plants mature, tolerance of heat, cold and drought, and resistance to disease."

Can I Plant and Walk Away?

One final misconception hunters hold is that seed blends developed for off-the-beaten-path plots don't require some elbow grease. Many believe that you can just throw the seed on the ground and walk away. According to Scott, that's not the case.

"One of our popular blends for a food plot that is planted deep in the woods is Imperial Whitetail No-Plow," he said. "We also make Secret Spot and Bow Stand for that spot deep in the woods where it is hard to get a tractor to. These types of seed blends can perform with soil that doesn't have perfect pH, but no matter what, you have to have good seed-to-soil contact for the seeds to germinate and grow. The leaves, debris, weeds and grasses need to be removed before the seed is spread. Some people bring an ATV into the woods and disc it. Some spray glyphosate with a handheld, backpack or ATV sprayer. Others who don't have an ATV or farm equipment use a rake and lots of elbow grease. The food plot needs a minimum of three to four hours of sun. These plots also need some fertilizer added and when possible, adding lime can be very beneficial as well."

"In these situations, the more a person can do in preparing the plot the better, but the seed blends are formulated with less-than-ideal conditions in mind," he said. "We have many happy customers who put in food plots off the beaten path and use the blends I spoke about. It can be a lot of work, but it can be well worth the effort."

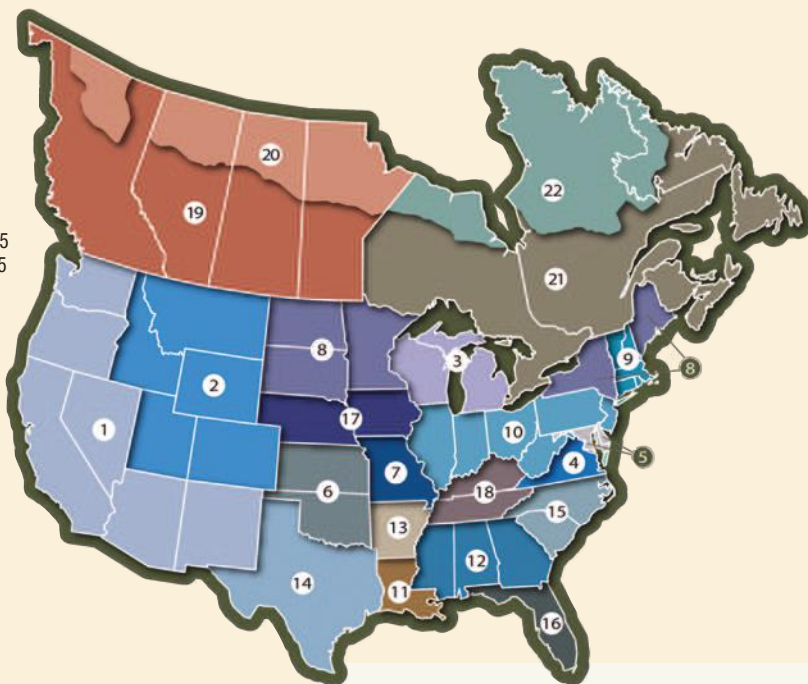
Planting food plots costs money and requires time and effort. Making sure you do everything right ahead of time and during the planting process can mean the difference between smiling with a big buck or going home empty-handed. A food plot is like many other things in life. The more you put into it, the more you get out of it. If you have questions about planting methods, seed blends or other food plot-related issues, call the Whitetail Institute at 800-688-3030. Its consultants will gladly help. 🍷

Food Plot Planting Dates...

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

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

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



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

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

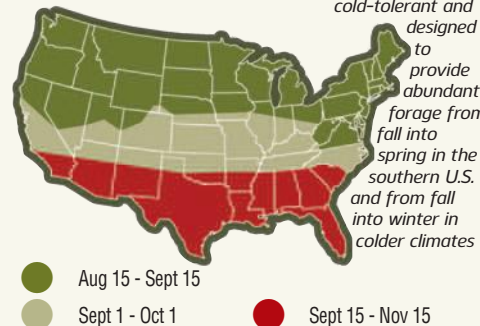
PLANTING DATES FOR WINTER-GREENS, TALL TINE TUBERS AND BEETS & GREENS

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

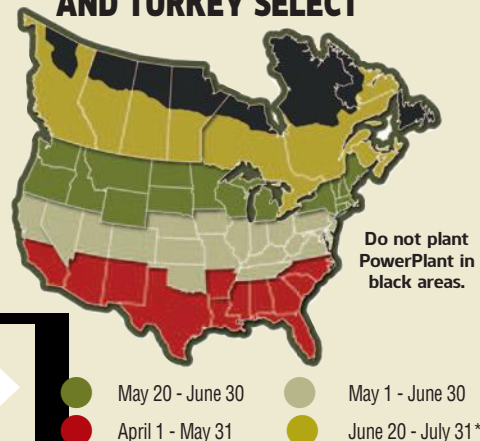
*Do not plant PowerPlant until soil temperatures reach a constant 65 degrees F. Wait as long as necessary for soil temperatures to reach a constant 65 degrees F before planting PowerPlant.

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



Do not plant PowerPlant in black areas.

Why We Hunt

By R.G. Bernier

“Any sportsman who can kill his deer without the tingling spine, the quick clutch at his heart, the delicious trembling of nerve fibers when the game is finally down, has no place in the deer woods.”

— Larry Koller, *Shots at Whitetails*

If I were to poll readers of *Whitetail News* and ask why they hunt deer, I'd get a wide variety of answers. Some would likely echo the one given by Sarah Palin, the former governor of Alaska, who said, “I eat. Therefore, I hunt.”

True, many hunters march off each autumn in search of a deer to fill the larder and satisfy their craving for wild venison. But if that were the entire existential experience, the process would quickly lose its charm. It would seem the entire exercise represents more grocery shopping than an actual hunt. It becomes more like a job; a task to complete rather than it being an exciting, passionate chase to romanticize, fanaticize, anticipate and revel in.

I've asked myself that question multiple times throughout my deer hunting career and have always come back to this response: I hunt for personal gratification. That self-satisfaction is experienced by tracking down my quarry in a wilderness setting, unfettered by mechanization or limitations, which cumulatively has led to fulfillment in the hunting experience. Indeed, there is a charm about hunting that cannot be equaled by most other sports that keeps us coming back day after day, week after week, and season after season.



Dustin Reid

Buck Fever

I clearly remember the paralyzing effect of this malady, which took hold during my second deer season. I was standing in front of my dad atop a stump, staring into the eyes of a buck facing me.

"Slowly raise your rifle, take aim and shoot," my dad whispered. On cue, I shouldered my gun and took aim, but no shot followed. Why? Because my right leg was shaking involuntarily like a proverbial leaf in a windstorm.

Again, my dad said, "Shoot." That time, it was with a bit more emphasis. I responded, "I can't stop shaking." The buck had put up with enough of the sideshow. He spun in one fluid motion, took two bounds and then piled up at the shot... of my dad's rifle.

"Buck fever affects veteran and novice deer hunters alike," Rob Wegner wrote, "and appears in about as many different guises as there are individuals who succumb to this frenzied derangement of deer hunting behavior." But isn't that sensation, the elevated endorphins, that continues to bring us back time after time? And how we counteract and suppress that malady becomes the difference.

Peering through his sight, a hunter finds enough of a hole in the brush to attempt a shot. His mouth is dry, his heart pounds, and sweat trickles a path down his neck as every muscle tenses. He exhales, the report follows, and then it is finished, with a life being taken or a buck that will live to see another sunrise.

To the non-participant, that might seem barbaric at worst and unintelligible at best, with a lot of indifference between.

Veteran biologist, guide and deer hunter Bob Humphrey provided an overview to help understand why otherwise rational humans

would rise from a warm bed long before first light during various conditions with no guarantee of success.

"The instantaneous answer is because that's what I have done for the past 40 years. But over that span, I have experienced many motivations.

"Initially, it was a goal, a challenge: to kill a deer. Those first few unsuccessful seasons were very frustrating but in hindsight turned out to be a blessing. As I do in any new venture, I put myself wholeheartedly into deer hunting, trying to learn everything I possibly can about my quarry. In the long term, this made me a better hunter, but it also gave me a much deeper appreciation of and respect for my quarry and the environment in which they live, to a level someone who has never hunted cannot attain.

"As eventual successes gave me a sense of accomplishment and boosted my confidence, I began seeking more challenges, taking up bowhunting and passing up certain deer (antlerless deer or young bucks) in hopes of something 'better.' And success in hunting gave me more confidence in other areas of life. Sometimes, deer hunting is an excuse just to be outside where I otherwise would not go. It's not always easy to rise before dawn and sit for hours on end, but the experience of watching the woods come alive is indescribable. Sometimes, the monotonous hours on stand are rewarded with rare glimpses of animal behavior. I've been buzzed by hawks and owls, watched porcupines mate (very carefully), and seen mink, fisher, fox and coyote hunt down and kill their prey. And I've watched a thousand golden sunsets in a peaceful setting



"A seasoned hunter, one with the hunting spirit, pursues his quarry on each occasion with the enthusiasm of his first encounter and with the reverence as though it were his last. I for one do not want to know when I have had my last hunt. "How do I wish to be remembered? Simply this: In his chest beats the heart of a hunter — a seasoned hunter who embraced the spirit of the hunt as he lived and how he lived so that those who follow will have a secure and well-defined path."

while others were dodging traffic or toiling at some industry.

"It took me a while to realize it, but as I've grown older, I have achieved a much greater appreciation for the camaraderie. I have been very fortunate to share dozens of hunting camps with some of the

finest people I know, and often it is the action that takes place riding to and from or in camp that makes the hunt. I've also made some life-long friends that I otherwise would never have met.

"Often, when speaking to a non-hunter, I feel some need to rationalize or justify my actions, which isn't very difficult to do. After the emotion and the deer have died, I'm left with a pile of pure organic protein. The mere idea that I have attained sustenance through my own hands is rewarding. I also enjoy the process of skinning, boning, cutting and wrapping, knowing the meat was well cared for and nothing was left to waste. And I certainly relish in the final phase, which is cooking and eating.

"With each successful hunt and over a lifetime of deer hunting, I have learned it is the journey, not the destination, that matters most."

As Humphrey aptly stated, there are different stages in a hunter's life in which emotions, expectations and outcomes change. And with these variations come altered reactions to buck fever.

Stages

The University of Wisconsin conducted a study more than 35 years ago in which it concluded America's deer hunters pass through five stages during their hunting careers. Here are those stages and how hunters experience buck fever during each of them.

Shooter

Every hunter needs a beginning; a starting point. For some, that comes early, and for others later. But within that initiation, some level of success needs to be experienced. Brian's indoctrination to whitetails began long before he could legally hunt. Through books, magazines, videos and the wild deer roaming around his property, the young man was fascinated by this animal. He watched his dad and brothers return from successful hunts and listened intently to the stories that came with these adventures. When he could legally hunt, Brian was more than ready.

"I was so excited about my first real deer hunt I don't think I slept a minute the night before," he said. "Let's just say nobody had to wake me up for breakfast that morning. When my dad and I finally arrived at our stand, it seemed like the sun would never come up. I had so many imaginative thoughts on how this would all play out, when without warning, there stood a buck. Immediately, my heart began pounding in my throat, ears, head and throughout my entire body. I don't remember aiming or taking off the safety, but the noise and recoil of my rifle from the shot still linger along with the antlers from my first fallen buck. I was more than hooked."

Limiting Out

"I not only wanted to experience the same thrill that overtook me when getting my first buck," Steve said, "but really needed to prove to myself that my success was something more than graceless luck. Although I would have killed a big buck had that been the first to appear, at this point in my career, I'm more interested in getting the job done."

Harry went farther. "Once I turn my phone on silent and lock the truck door, that's when the excitement starts," he said. "I guess that would be classified as anticipation. The most exciting part of hunting is always when I actually see a deer. Not much else can produce the

form of adrenaline and heart-pounding emotion like seeing a big buck, especially if it's before he sees you."

Trophy

"I've killed my share of bucks in the past," Hart wrote, "and now I challenge myself physically as I traverse ridges, mountains and swamps. I have a deepened yearning and curiosity to see what's over the next ridge or rise, in the middle of cedar swamp or across the next stream. It is in these secluded locations that I search and believe I will find the largest, most majestic buck in the forest. It is like being on a treasure hunt where I'm constantly rewarded by the many chance encounters with all of God's forest creatures. And then, when ultimately my path intersects with the object of my passion, my whole demeanor transforms.

"An immediate acceleration of my heartbeat and breathing overtakes me. It is an exhilarating feeling of anticipation. Over the years, it has yet to dull. However, as I've seasoned as a hunter, I'm better able to control the effects of this emotion. I sense if this feeling is ever lost while hunting, I would probably hang up my rifle."

Method

As mentioned, methodology in my pursuit of whitetails plays a huge role in overall satisfaction and excitement. When hunters reach this stage, they have many hunting forays in their rearview mirrors. Randy is one.

"What gets me excited at this point in my hunting career is the same thing that got me excited as a young boy while being taught how to track and stalk by my grandfather: a fresh, mature buck track," he said. "There are few activities I would rather do than track a big buck in the snow. Being a snap shooter at quickly departing deer has, in large, prevented me from developing the malady of buck fever, at least on the forward end. Once I've squeezed off my volley of shots, and with the buck out of sight, the excitement of the moment becomes real and exhilarating."

QDMA founder Joe Hamilton encapsulates the spirit of the final stage in a hunter's progression.

"This is my creed," he wrote. "A seasoned hunter, one with the hunting spirit, pursues his quarry on each occasion with the enthusiasm of his first encounter and with the reverence as though it were his last. I for one do not want to know when I have had my last hunt.

"How do I wish to be remembered? Simply this: In his chest beats the heart of a hunter — a seasoned hunter who embraced the spirit of the hunt as he lived and how he lived so that those who follow will have a secure and well-defined path."

Conclusion

The reasons we hunt are as unique and personal as the hunters who pursue the whitetail deer. Although our methods and weapons vary, we are prompted by Gene Wensel to always remember the importance of why.

"Why we hunt is far more important than where, when or how," he wrote. "Hunting for the right reasons is much more important than the act itself. It defines fair chase — our level of passion, our future, our very existence." 

REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

(Continued from page 27)

about Whitetail Institute products...

I have been planting Imperial Whitetail Clover for 10 to 15 years. I have noticed that the bucks we have been harvesting have been getting bigger, and we have also been seeing more deer. I talked a neighbor into planting a 4-acre plot of it on his property as well. He has seen many bucks grazing in the plots, and he can sit on the deck of his cabin and watch them. With that plot, we have six plots spread across 550 acres.

We have started posting trail cams around the properties, some on trails and some on the plots. It is amazing to see the size and number of bucks that we get on the cameras. Many of them we don't see during shooting hours, but it is still nice to know that we could get a chance at them.

The buck I got last fall is the nicest I have taken. He was an 8-point, and scored 145, and had a 22.5-inch spread. I did not have any pictures of him on camera but a



couple of weeks after I harvested him, the neighbor sent me a picture of him. When I shot him, he was about 40 yards off a clover plot.

Thanks, Whitetail Institute.

Briant Russell - Wisconsin



I have used the Whitetail Oats Plus for years with wonderful results. Last year, I expanded my food plot to accommodate Winter Peas Plus to go with the oats. The results were tremendous. Long story short I do not use anything that doesn't say Whitetail Institute. I have tried most of the other brands, and the deer just don't prefer them as much. Period.

On the next to last day of last year's Tennessee firearms season, I was able to harvest this once-in-a-lifetime whitetail that scored 195-6/8 inches. I am an average Joe, not a farmer, not an outfitter, and have very limited places and equipment for use. I can see the science in Whitetail Institute products every day I hunt and the deer pile out into them. Whitetail Institute has never let me down. Keep up the great work! Thanks, Whitetail Institute, for premium products at a fair price for the common guy.

Brian Clark - Tennessee 🍷



This food plot is called the Creek Stand. We used to get one or two deer at most on trail cam in this area. We planted this plot with Pure Attraction, and it has been completely overrun with deer. It is a great testimonial for the attraction power of Whitetail Institute products. Attached is a trail cam pic.

Jason Faulkner - Pennsylvania

Send Us Your Photos!

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

info@whitetailinstitute.com

or send them to:

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



Charles J. Alsheimer

Nutrition Drives Deer Activity Trends on Northern Ranges

A Michigan study illustrates the link between forage and the daily and seasonal rhythms of whitetails.

By John J. Ozoga

Deer activity patterns interest deer hunters for a good reason: Active deer are more vulnerable than inactive ones. Therefore, because most of us cannot — or simply will not — hunt continuously, we tend to concentrate hunting effort during those time frames when we think deer are most active.

Scientists have studied deer activity using various methods, including number of deer seen per hour, spotlight counts, distance moved per time period and others. Unfortunately, many such studies relied upon visual observation, which can produce biased results.

Researchers Paul Beier and Dale McCullough were the first to use sophisticated motion-sensitive radio-telemetry collars to study activity patterns of deer on the famed George Reserve (a 2-square-mile, deer-proof-fenced area) in southern Michigan. Their system, used from 1980 to 1984, provided reliable data on deer activity at all times of day without requiring that the animal be visible to the observer.

The Study

The George Reserve has served as an outdoor laboratory for the University of Michigan since 1930. Hardwood forests, dominated by oak and hickory, cover slightly more than one-half of the Reserve. But the area is well interspersed with open woodlands, grasslands, bogs and marshes. Lowland tamarack swamplands, which contain a diverse mix of shrubs, serve as protective cover for deer during severe winters.

The amount of snow cover in this area is highly variable from one winter to the next, but it's relatively shallow during most winters. The whitetail rut typically peaks during the last week of October and the first week of November, resulting in peak fawning during late May and early June.

Twenty-one yearling and older deer were captured at the Reserve and fitted with motion-sensitive radio collars. The automated system provided a measure of deer activity around the clock throughout the year.

Such monitoring permitted the researchers to document daily and seasonal rhythms of deer activity. In addition, they analyzed the influence of cloud cover, temperature, wind speed, snow depth, relative humidity, rain, snowfall, fog, moon presence, moon visibility and moon phase. Within each season, they analyzed data to determine which variables most strongly influenced deer activity and habitat use.

Seasonal Activity Patterns

On a monthly basis, deer were least active in February 1982 (37 percent) and most active in October 1982 (62 percent). Percent of time active ranged from a low of 21 percent Feb. 6 to a high of 82 percent Oct. 18 (that is, the pre-rut).

Seasonal peaks in deer activity consistently occurred in spring and fall, with a pronounced low in January and February, and a moderate low in June, July and August.

Based upon direct observation during winter and spring, Beier and McCullough concluded that deer foraged about 95 percent of their active time. Activities such as standing, traveling, grooming and social interactions occupied a very small proportion of active time. For this reason, changes in the level of activity generally reflect changes in time spent feeding. Unfortunately, no similar observations were made during the rut.

The Winter Slump

The winter decline in deer activity coincides with a seasonal decrease in food quality and availability because of cold weather and

snow cover. Across their Northern range, whitetails characteristically exhibit reduced activity and metabolism, accompanied by lower food consumption during winter. Metabolically speaking, as winter progresses, deer shift into low gear. Instead of accelerating body heat production to compensate for cold exposure, the whitetails' metabolic rate actually declines as they become less active and extremely energy conservative.

Deer were especially inactive during December 1981 through February 1982, for example, a period of especially heavy snow conditions.

The Spring Shift

Toward the end of winter, as the hours of daylight increase, the whitetail's physiology and behavior change markedly. Both sexes and all ages become much more active in March and, given the opportunity, demonstrate increased food consumption.

This springtime rise in deer activity typically occurs before green-up. Thus, an increase in metabolic demand, in the face of low forage quality and depletion of body fat forces deer to spend more time foraging to meet their basic nutritional needs. For this reason, a prolonged winter can prove devastating to malnourished whitetails.

The Summer Low

Given the whitetail's increasing nutritional demands associated with lactation and antler growth, the researchers were surprised to see deer activity decline during June and July. However, at the George Reserve, as is common throughout Northern deer range, deer forage quality peaks during May through July, and forage quantity peaks during June through August. As a result, the researchers speculated that nutritious forage was so plentiful in June and July deer could meet their metabolic needs by foraging fewer hours per day.

Increased Fall Activity

Autumn is a critical time for Northern whitetails. Food quality and quantity typically decrease at a time when young deer must accomplish their maximum growth and all deer must accumulate fat reserves in preparation for winter. Like other seasonal events in the whitetail's life, the accumulation of fat is cued to photoperiod and is hormonally controlled. Fattening is an obligatory process, meaning all deer are inclined to become more active, eat more and accumulate fat as day length shortens in autumn.

During autumn, the health status of mature does depends upon whether they raised fawns the previous summer. Those not burdened with nursing fawns experience less overall energy drain, molt before does that have raised fawns and might be quite fat by mid-October. Because fawns must simultaneously grow and fatten, they seldom achieve their maximum size and fatness until December.

Adult bucks usually commence fattening earlier than other deer — in July. They are also the first to molt into their winter coat, usually in early September. Prime-age bucks will be "hog fat" by early October.

Rutting activities also result in increased deer activity and add to the energy drain for both sexes. Although adult bucks maintain their seasonal high level of activity, they reduce their food consumption and might lose 20 to 25 percent of their peak body weight in a few weeks. Even does demonstrate increased activity as they approach estrus.

Adult bucks were, on average, no more active than adult females during the rut. However, large-antlered bucks (those 2.5 years and older, with 8 to 12 points) were significantly more active than smaller-antlered bucks. Large-antlered and small-antlered bucks were about equally active during December through April. But, the larger bucks were active 2.2 hours per day longer than smaller bucks during May through December.

The differences in activity between antler classes from May through September might have been because of differences in metabolic requirements and feeding activity. However, in October and November, the difference was more likely because of greater rutting activity on the part of older bucks.

Daily Activity Rhythms

Daily patterns of deer activity were variable from one month to the next. The primary feature of the daily pattern was an evening activity peak. Except in winter, another peak of activity occurred during the early morning.

The timing of the morning and evening peaks shifted seasonally with sunrise and sunset. In the morning, the activity peak occurred just after sunrise in all seasons. In contrast, the peak in evening activity started before and continued past sunset in spring, summer and fall, but ended at or near sunset in winter.

Therefore, during winter, deer were most active during the daytime (diurnal), with one late-afternoon activity peak. In other seasons, deer were crepuscular with activity peaks at dusk and just after dawn.

When the weather was cold and snowy, deer reduced their activity by shortening or dropping the morning peak of activity. This appeared to be an energy-conserving strategy, because this was the coldest part of the day.

Contrary to the George Reserve study, other researchers, including me, have reported secondary peaks of deer activity during midday and at night.

Deer at the George Reserve exhibited a pronounced midday slump in activity during June and July, which suggests that deer could meet their nutritional needs during a shorter time on rich summer forage. This also meant deer could forgo feeding during the hottest time of the day, when deerflies were at their maximum.

Weather Effects

Temperature and snow depth exerted the strongest effects on George Reserve deer activity. Wind speed, cloud cover and relative humidity were important factors only as they interacted with temperature. Deer were more active on foggy summer days. However, moonlight did not affect nighttime deer activity.

Deer often timed their activities with respect to sunlight, wind speed and air moisture to minimize heat loss during cool conditions or to minimize heat stress during warm conditions.

In each season, the greatest deer activity occurred when the temperature was 43 to 61 degrees and decreased at higher and lower temperatures. In summer, peak deer activity occurred at 59 versus 51 in fall and 56 in spring. This suggests that the deer's "comfort zone" is somewhat warmer in summer than in spring or fall.

In winter, the effect of temperature also interacted with cloud cover, which also interacted with time of day. When daytime temperatures were low, deer were active under clear skies. However, during warmer

weather, or at night, deer activity did not change with cloud cover.

During warm weather in spring, summer and fall, deer activity increased with wind speed. However, deer activity did not vary with wind speed during cold weather.

During fall and winter, deer activity decreased with, decreasing temperature when it was damp. This apparently occurred because moist air has a higher specific heat than dry air. That is, an active deer would lose heat more rapidly in cold, moist air than in cold dry air. Bedding would reduce the deer's exposed surface area and hence minimize heat loss.

Deer activity decreased as snow depth increased. Even scant snow cover can force deer to shift from eating nutritious herbaceous forage to less-nourishing woody browse. As snow depths build, deer become less active to conserve energy.

During winter, spring and fall, deer used forested cover most intensively during the daytime, but moved to more open habitat at night. In winter, for example, deer switched from dawn and daytime use of closed forests to dusk and night use of grasslands and use of bogs peaked at dawn. Likewise, their use of closed forests in spring and of swamps in spring and fall peaked during daytime, when use of grasslands was lowest.

Sex Differences

The sexes differed in their annual activity patterns, with females generally showing a higher percentage of time active. Females were more active than males during winter, spring and early summer. This difference was probably because of increased metabolic demand as-

sociated with pregnancy and lactation. Also, females tend to select a higher-quality diet, which requires more foraging time.

The sexes had similar daily activity rhythms during most months. However, during September and October, males were more active than females at night and females more active than males during daytime. The biological significance of this difference is unclear but is probably related to the rut. Scraping by bucks, for example, is done primarily at night.

Management Implications

Clearly, seasonal deer activity trends and sex differences in these trends are closely linked to nutritional need and availability. Don't forget, whitetails are selective feeders. In a natural setting, it takes time to search for the most nutritious forage available. As this study has shown, 95 percent of deer activity is related to feeding.

On their Northern range, the whitetail's seasonal activity cycle is predictable: peaks of activity occur during spring and fall, with lows during summer and winter. This cycle is primarily driven by the animal's metabolic needs versus food availability, so it could vary from one area to the next depending upon forage quantity and quality. In the South, for example, drought or deer overabundance during the fawn-rearing period could be critically important.

In winter, the Northern whitetails' shelter-seeking behavior and marked decline in activity are natural energy conserving behaviorisms that coincide with a seasonal decline in forage quality and availability because of snow cover — although safety from predators is also a consideration.

In spring, pregnant does must find adequate nutrients for fetal development, and young deer must resume growth after a stressful winter. It's a time when copious amounts of nutritious forage in the form of succulent new herbaceous growth — high in protein, energy and essential minerals and vitamins — are essential.

High newborn fawn mortality can usually be linked to springtime nutritional shortage and poor fetal development; malnourished does are even less likely to defend newborn fawns from predators.

In autumn, energy-rich foods high in carbohydrates, such as hard and soft mast, in conjunction with lush herbaceous growth are important for building fat stores. Remember, fawns must continue to grow and simultaneously build fat reserves during autumn to survive three or more months of winter nutritional stress. Small, lean fawns might not even survive a comparatively mild winter.

From a management perspective, the goal must be to create early successional forest types, openings and plant diversity to meet the whitetail's seasonally changing nutritional needs. Although less likely on public lands, private landowners have the opportunity to use food plot management geared to rectify specific seasonal shortages.

There are probably exceptions, but on the Northern range, it's best to practice food plot management designed to meet the whitetail's needs during spring and autumn. Even if deer vacate your property during winter, well-nourished healthy individuals are more likely to be productive, survive winter and return at breakup.

My advice is to consult with the deer nutrition experts at the Whitetail Institute to design a food plot program that best meets your needs. 

Whitetail Institute SOIL TEST KITS

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



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Imperial Whitetail Winter-Greens

A Revolution and its Evolution

By Whitetail Institute Staff

The introduction of Imperial Whitetail Winter-Greens was a revolution in the all-brassica food plot market because of its unparalleled attractiveness to whitetails. Since then, Winter-Greens has continued to evolve, as the Whitetail Institute found ways to make it even better. As a revolution, and through its continued evolution, Winter-Greens is far more attractive to deer than any other all-brassica product the Whitetail Institute has tested.

Winter-Greens as a revolution in the all-brassica food plot market. All forage brassicas have four features in common: They establish quickly; grow rapidly; become sweeter after the first frosts of fall, when an enzyme converts starches in the plants to sugars; and generally remain available even during the coldest winter months. However, they can vary widely in palatability and attractiveness to whitetails.

The critical fact that separates Winter-Greens from the pack is the nature of the brassicas in the blend, which include lettuce-type brassicas — brassicas with a vegetable genetic background that are far more attractive than other types of brassicas. Designing Winter-Greens around these lettuce-type brassicas is why deer

prefer it so heavily. In several years of side-by-side testing of Winter-Greens against other brassica plantings, deer showed repeatedly that they preferred Winter-Greens.

Why does Winter-Greens continue to lead the brassica food plot market? Longtime Whitetail Institute customers likely know the answer already: It's because the Whitetail Institute never stops looking for ways to make its products even better, and that includes Winter-Greens. One such improvement was the addition of small amounts of the Whitetail Institute's proprietary Tall Tine Turnip as a late-season component that helps Winter-Greens last even longer into winter. Tall Tine Turnip is the only turnip variety developed specifically for food plots for deer. The latest improvement is the Whitetail Institute's proprietary WINA 210 Forage Kale, which is unquestionably the most attractive kale variety the Whitetail Institute has tested.

Winter-Greens is designed for fall planting. Like other brassicas, Winter-Greens should be planted in late summer or early fall, depending on your location. Because Winter-Greens is so tender and attractive, deer often hit it much earlier than they do standard brassicas. And when the weather turns cold, Winter-Greens gets even sweeter and continues to attract and hold deer into winter, an especially critical time when most natural food sources are too tough for deer to use or are not available.

If you're seeking an all-brassica planting that maxes out attraction and provides tonnage from fall through the coldest months, Winter-Greens is what you're looking for. You can find additional information about Winter-Greens by going to www.whitetailinstitute.com or calling the Whitetail Institute's in-house consultants at (800) 688-3030. The consultants are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., CST, Monday through Friday. The call and the service are free. 🦌



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

Price with coupon: \$99.96

Please send _____ 40 lb. quantities of Imperial Ambush.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

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



IMPERIAL 30-06® THRIVE™ YOU SAVE \$25.00



Suggested Retail: \$90.97 (60 lbs.)

Coupon Price: \$65.97

Please send _____ 60 lb. quantities of Thrive.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

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



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

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

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

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

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

Call for larger quantities.

TOTAL \$ _____

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



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



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

Coupon Price: \$79.92 or \$44.97

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

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

TOTAL \$ _____

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



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

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

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

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

Please send _____ Pint(s) of SLAY Herbicide.

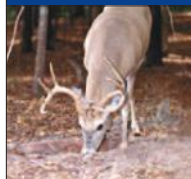
Call for larger quantities.

TOTAL \$ _____

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



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



Suggested Retail: \$59.96 and \$29.95

Coupon Price: \$46.96 or \$24.95

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

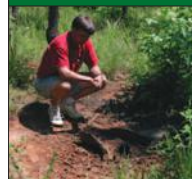
Please send _____ ☐ 1 Block @ \$24.95

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

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



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



Suggested Retail: \$59.96 and \$29.95

Coupon Price: \$34.96 or \$19.95

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

Please send _____ ☐ 1 Block @ \$19.95

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

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



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



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

Coupon Price: \$65.97 or \$74.97

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

☐ Original 30-06™ @ \$65.97

☐ 30-06™ Plus Protein @ \$74.97

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ _____

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



* Important: Shipping & Payment Information

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

Name: _____

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

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Email: _____

Payment Method:

☐ Check or Money Order Enclosed

Charge to my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Discover

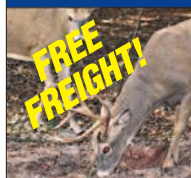
Credit Card#: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Sec. Code _____

Signature: _____



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KRAZE® Flavored Deer Attractant YOU SAVE \$40-\$65



Suggested Retail: \$119.99 — 6-Pak, \$69.96 — 3-Pak

Coupon Price: \$54.96 or \$29.97

Please send _____ ☐ 6-Pak KRAZE @ \$54.96

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

TOTAL \$ _____

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



COUPON PRICES NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE

Jason Say – Pennsylvania

This year has been an unbelievable season, as I personally took my largest deer ever in northwestern Pennsylvania, a 154-inch stud on a Whitetail Institute Pure Attraction food plot. But that experience didn't even compare to seeing my little girl, 9-year-old Addison, take her very first deer! Addison has been practicing hard with her crossbow and made a great shot at 22 yards on a Whitetail Institute Fusion food plot. I can't begin to describe the emotions and how proud I was as a dad, but all those parents who have taken their child for their first deer understand how I was feeling! Thanks, Whitetail Institute.



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*Whitetail Institute of North America
239 Whitetail Trail, Pintlala 36043
Attn.: First Deer Dept.*

Shawn Rafferty – Michigan



This year, I decided to put in food plots on the property I have permission to hunt. But the big mistake I made was not using Whitetail Institute products. Some of the plots came in, but during bow hunting and the opening day of the Michigan firearms season, the deer were just not coming in to feed on the crops that grew. My two young daughters have gotten into hunting over the last couple of years, and had not had an opportunity to shoot or even see deer within range. This was the reason for the food plots; to give them an advantage while hunting. Obviously, I used the wrong stuff.

After the season was underway, a close friend offered to have my daughters come out to his property to hunt, only 15 minutes from where I hunt. I took my 12-year-old daughter there on Nov. 18. The amount of deer we saw was amazing. He had planted Winter-Greens, and my gosh, what a difference. The food plots looked amazing, but more

important, brought in the deer in what seemed to be herds.

My daughter Ryelyn was able to harvest her first deer that evening — a nice little 5-point (photo 1). I have to admit, I was a little nervous watching her get prepared to shoot. With so many deer in the Winter-Greens, I wasn't sure that she was on the one I had told her to shoot.

A little more than a week later, I got another invitation to come out with my 10-year-old. Once again, Winter-Greens did not disappoint. The deer came in early and right to the food plot in front of the blind in which we were sitting. My daughter Kennedy was amazed by the amount of deer we were seeing. The spike horn that came to eat was the one she decided she wanted to attempt to take. Another first for her! (photo 2) The Winter-Greens and she did their job, and we had another deer down.

As a dad, these two experiences were the most incredible thing for me as a hunter. Watching my daughters harvest their first deer totally made anything I have done in the woods seem trivial. This deer season will be one that will always be remembered by me and my daughters. I owe many thanks and gratitude to my friend who offered up his property to hunt. Mostly, I want to thank him for having the good sense to use Whitetail Institute's Winter-Greens. Without that product, this may not have been possible. Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for putting out such an amazing product.

I can honestly say that I am now convinced there isn't another product I would consider putting into my food plots. This year was a great learning experience for me, and I will never make the mistake of not using Whitetail Institute products again. 🍷



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

Whitetail Institute **ATTRACTANTS**



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

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



CAUTION

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



Whitetail Institute

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CAPS

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

Caps: \$9.95

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



Hunter Orange Logo Cap



Camo w/Tan Mesh Logo Cap



Brown w/Tan Mesh Logo Cap



Camo Logo Cap



Black Logo Cap

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

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



Front Chest Design



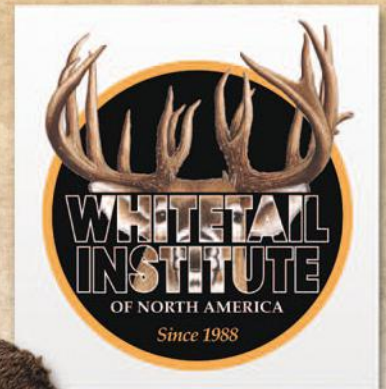
Front Chest Design



Upper Back Design



Upper Back Design



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Front Chest Design

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Available colors:

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Whitetail Institute Official Logo Short Sleeve Tees

Available sizes:

S to XXXL

Available color:

White

Imperial Whitetail Clover

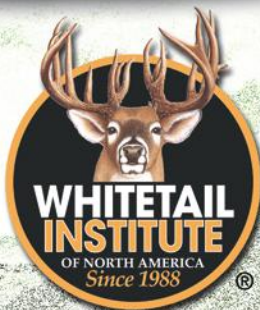
FIRST in the FIELD

SINCE 1988



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

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



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The Big Country Blind Platinum 360° is perfect for the hunter who needs more leg and arm room or has lots of gear. There is no better blind in the world for two hunters and a camera man. The room, along with the visibility for all hunters is absolutely amazing. Combine the 46" tall vertical windows, with large oversized horizontal windows and roomy interior, and you have the ultimate blind for compound bow, crossbow or gun hunting. This combination of size and window functionality gives you plenty of room, visibility and angles to make a perfect shot when the moment of truth arrives. There is plenty of room for 3-4 adults, a small family or even enough room to sleep in comfortably overnight when you need that extra edge for an early morning hunt.



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