

# WHITETAIL news



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**COVER:**

## The Immediate and Long-Term Benefits of Food Plots

Story On Page 44

## HUNTING THE HOME PLACE

**There's  
Nothing Like It**

Story on Page 5

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## A Message from **RAY SCOTT**

Founder and President of the Whitetail Institute of North America

# A Food Plot “Subculture”

I especially agree with Mr. Sides' premise that diversity of interests is alive and thriving in the U.S. and I appreciate his definition of subcultures as national “families” because we really do think of our food plotters as family or a community.

A number of years ago my son, Steve, made the observation that food plotting and whitetail management had become a virtual lifestyle for many outdoorsmen. Considering the time, money and commitment involved, that is not hard to understand. Successful management and food plots require not just seasonal attention but year-round planning and activity.

That conversation has always stuck with me and reminded me that about 25 years ago I met prolific author, Hampton Sides when he was writing a book called “Stomping Grounds.” The book was a perceptive view of what he considered to be some unique American “subcultures” from Tupperware salespeople to Harley buffs... and professional bass fishermen. Since I was considered by many to be the granddaddy of modern bass fishing and bass tournaments he wanted an interview and I was happy to oblige.

I was intrigued by Sides' definition of subcultures as ways of lives and “tribes” of people who “shape their lives around private passions and form national families or communities of kindred spirits.” That sure described my pro anglers at the time. And as far as I'm concerned in many ways it describes today's loyal Whitetail Institute customers who engage in food plotting and whitetail management.

I especially like the word community because one of Mr. Webster's definition of community is “groups of people with a com-

mon characteristic or interest living together within a larger society.” That's a pretty good definition of the food plotters scattered from small towns, large cities and rural areas who put on camo and work boots or climb on a tractor or ATV or handcrank a seed spreader to plant or hunt or manage for whitetail.

While there is not (as yet) a large membership organization or an enthusiastic annual get-together described by Mr. Sides, (hence the title “Stomping Grounds”) these days, I think the author would find whitetail managers and food plotters an all-American subculture in spirit if not in formal organization.

I especially agree with Mr. Sides' premise that diversity of interests is alive and thriving in the U.S. and I appreciate his definition of subcultures as national “families” because we really do think of our food plotters as family or a community.

But I will add something important to the understanding of “subculture” as far as outdoorsmen go, i.e. anglers and whitetail hunters, and that is, there is a very deep-seated desire to not only protect and preserve our culture but also to enhance it for the generations to follow.

That is a very unique distinction for our “subculture.”

Ray Scott



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# There's Nothing Like Hunting the Home Place

By **Matt Harper**

Photos by the Author

**The day broke cold and clear, with a bluish-pink pre-dawn horizon on the eastern edge of the mountain valley.**

Around the perimeter, thick stands of alder and swamp birch gave way to groves of aspens. Farther up the mountain, massive dark-timber pines stretched up to high rocky peaks. Everything was covered in a fresh blanket of snow that had fallen the previous night, and with little wind, the mountains were silent. The previous three days had been unseasonably warm, but the cold front that had brought the snow dropped temperatures to below freezing, so we hoped rutting activity would improve and a bull, amped up on testosterone, would respond to the strange moaning call coming from my guide.

The valley was not large — maybe 200 yards wide and a half-mile long — and we were perched atop a small wooded knoll toward the western edge of the valley. We called this our hidden valley because my guide had not seen it before. We discovered it the day before after we followed good sign for about two miles, steadily working down in elevation until we broke through the trees to find the idyllic mountain hideaway.

Fresh tracks in the snow proved that moose had been there during the night, and with the change in temperature and being in such an enchanting setting, our hopes were high. Almost immediately after the first call, the telltale labored grunt of a bull responded nearby. Only 80 yards to our north, a bull emerged from an aspen grove, but he was young, so we passed. For the next hour, we continued to call, and just as the sun was breaking over the mountains, we heard a grunt from a bull higher up the slope in the pine trees but moving down toward the call.

Excited anticipation is not a strong enough description of my emotions. I felt like I was coming out of my skin waiting to see what kind of bull was headed to the hidden valley. The sun created the appearance of a billion diamonds in the snow on the valley floor and throughout the mountain slopes as I focused on the moving brush that marked where the bull would break from cover. And then, he was there.

At first, I wasn't sure what I was seeing, as it appeared that the bull's massive antlers were glowing as if lit from within. It was one of the most incredible scenes I have ever witnessed, and I could never adequately describe the beauty of the giant moose on the edge of the hidden valley. His huge palms had filled with snow the night before and, in the glare of the morning sun, shone white and glimmering, almost as if a large lighted halo wrapped his head. My guide brought me out of my trance, and I found a small cedar branch for a rest. The bull began to circle and gave me a 180-yard broadside shot. At the sound of the .300 Win. Mag., the moose lurched forward a short distance and died.

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## Blessings

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I think it's good for the soul to reflect often about the blessings in our lives. I thank God, every day for the blessings that He has so graciously bestowed upon me. They are mostly, if not all, undeserved, and the acknowledgment of that makes you humble knowing that blessings are not an entitlement but rather a gift from God. I was born into a wonderful family and married an incredible woman, and together we have two smart, beautiful daughters. I love all of them very much.

I have also been blessed with the opportunity to fulfill my passion







*A great hunt is more satisfying when you share it with family.*

for hunting and the outdoors. Through the years, I have hunted elk in six states, mule deer in three states, mountain lions in Nevada, caribou in Quebec, alligators in Florida, bear in Canada and just about everything you can legally hunt in Texas. Before you think you're reading the writings of a multimillionaire, you are not. I have been blessed with situations that let me to go on these adventures, and I am thankful for the opportunities. When I was younger and read about those kinds of hunts in magazines, I thought, "If I could go on any of these hunts, it would surely be the best hunt ever." And like the Alberta moose hunt I mentioned, I have had some incredible experiences.

But upon reflection, I've realized the best hunts I've had have occurred on my family farm in Iowa. You might think that sounds crazy, but let me explain why I stand by my conviction that there's nothing like hunting the home place.

### **Family and Tradition**

My first hunting memories involved a pump air rifle, a pocket full of BBs and unrestrained access to creeks, woods, sloughs and brush piles at our family farm. The game was squirrel and rabbits, or bullfrogs in summer, and my grandma made me a deal that she would cook anything I shot and brought back to her. The journey would begin soon after leaving the backyard and always started at the creek,

where I would scale the high banks, risking life and limb, sometimes taking rope in case I needed to tie off in fear of a deathly plummet. Of course, I never used the rope, as the banks were only 20 feet tall and not that hard for a youngster to climb. Then again, I also rarely needed the three pocket knives, broken compass, old army canteen and kitchen matches — which always got soaked crossing the creek — I carried with me.

I tracked and chased my prey through the ridgetop hickory and oak groves and in the bottoms where the black walnuts grew. I would kick brush piles and stumps and generally stomped my way through anything that looked like it would hold something to shoot at. Almost every trip, I encountered bears, mountain lions and sometimes unknown, unearthly creatures that I would narrowly but bravely escape just in the nick of time. I can't tell you that I ever actually saw any of those ferocious critters, but I'm sure they were there. In fact, I'm pretty sure I saw Sasquatch once. My brother told me it was just our dad, covered in mud from fixing a water gap in the creek, but I'm not so



*The author's passion for turkey hunting came from his father.*





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sure. It was an adventure every time I headed to the woods, and it was real, filled with excitement and produced some of my fondest childhood memories.

As I grew and was allowed to carry a shotgun, hunting changed to walking fence lines and sloughs with my dad in search of rooster pheasants. I can tell you the exact place where at 12 years old, I shot my first rooster, which jumped from a small patch of switchgrass and flew right to left angling away from me. I shouldered the gigantic Stevens 12-gauge and knocked the bird and myself down in one shot. I remember my dad smiling at me as I carried the beautifully feathered bird back toward him and the pride I felt with the simple words of, "Good shot."

When wild turkeys were reintroduced and we started seeing them on the farm, Dad and I hunted them, too. We had no idea what we were doing, and it took several years to shoot one, but we hunted them nonetheless. The only way my dad can remember the year I got married is that it was the same year he shot his first gobbler on the farm. Later, we began hunting deer together on the farm, with dad more interested in looking for turkeys than deer, and together, we blood-trailed and field-dressed the first buck I shot with a bow.

As mentioned, I have two wonderful daughters, and as a bonus, they like to hunt. I'm supposed to say I didn't push them to it, and I guess I didn't. But in reality, I always asked if they wanted to go, so maybe encouraged is the appropriate word. We would fill a backpack with coloring books, juice boxes and bags of chips and head to the shooting house. They would get excited when we saw a fawn, and I got excited at them being excited. By age 8, both girls could age bucks better than most men, and when it came to blood trailing, they were like hounds. I was with them for the first deer they shot. I held my breath to see if they would laugh or cry, but both were so fired up they could barely climb down from the stand.

Along with family, the farm itself is special in its familiarity. There's the small woodland creek overshadowed by huge oaks on either side and a bend where the bank flattens into a sandbar, where I have spent many hours. It's a quiet, special place where I always feel at peace. There's an old cement tank built in the early 1900s, where a gun fight occurred between two feuding neighbors, resulting in the death of one. A railroad right-of-way was the path of thousands of railcars and engines, which I can still envision even though the tracks were torn out 30 years ago. We now own that path where the tracks were, but I still can hear my grandpa saying, "Make sure you listen for trains, son," as I walk down what is now a lane. Grandpa always warned me of trains, but he had a good reason. His tractor was cut in half by a runaway train car — with him on it.

There's an old hedge corner post on the eastern edge of the farm, which I walk by to get to one of my best stands. We used that post once to tie up a cow trying to have a calf, and worked for more than an hour pulling that calf only to have it die weeks later by falling in a huge ravine, the edge of which I skirt walking to another stand. In almost every place I look, there's a memory that's so dear and sweet its existence is almost palpable.

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## Working the Land

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Our farm is a working farm. Growing up, I spent most of my time doing some sort of chore or job on our farm. We grew hay, cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens and grain crops. We were the stereotypical southern Iowa farm. We still raise crops and cattle on the farm, but we now



*Emma, the author's oldest daughter, carries on the Harper hunting tradition.*

also plant food plots for deer and turkeys.

Another blessing is that I went to work for the Whitetail Institute a few years after college. Even though I'm no longer with the company, I attribute my whitetail hunting success largely to the knowledge I gained while being part of the organization.

I had never planted a food plot before but soon realized the benefits plots such as Imperial Whitetail Clover or Winter-Greens could provide to the quality of deer on the farm and the quality of hunting. The first year I worked for Whitetail Institute, I planted an Imperial White-tail Clover food plot in the middle of a hay field. To my amazement, I watched deer walk through the hay field, not even pausing to nibble, and go straight to the Imperial Whitetail Clover field.

I was sold, and for the past 20 years, I have planted food plots on the farm and reaped the benefits they have provided in the form of more than 20 Pope and Young-class bucks and five Boone and Crockett bucks, all but two of which came from one of our farms. I'm not what you would consider a great hunter. I'm average at best, and much of my success can be attributed to where I live, but also greatly because I manage our farms, and using food plots and 30-06 mineral are critical parts of that strategy.

But aside from letting me shoot good deer, food plots have also given me a better appreciation for the concept of improving wildlife through specific practices and programs that can be done even on a working farm. In fact, hunting is now a year-round activity. No, I am not shooting deer out of season, but hunting has become more than just harvesting a deer. There is planning, testing, working and continually trying to improve the farm from a wildlife perspective. We still raise



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cash crops, but there's something different about planting a food plot for the sole purpose of improving wildlife on the farm. Taking a wasted piece of flood-prone lowland and turning it into a wetland, or creating a bedding area by encouraging shrubs and brush in an otherwise unusable chunk of ground seems to somehow transform the farm into something better.

It's not that we still don't traditionally farm the ground, but we now create a place and habitat that encourages wild things to thrive. There's an incredible satisfaction in the development of such a place; a place where you can watch the corn grow in one field and a food plot grow in another. You can watch young calves run through the pasture but just over the hill see deer getting their last few bites of Imperial Whitetail Clover before heading to bed.

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## The Joy of Hunting the Home Place

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Strangely, almost every time I hunt far from home, my thoughts drift back to home. Of course, I think of my wife and children and miss them, but I'm also thinking about the farm and comparing it to where I am. I'm not saying I don't enjoy hunting various places throughout North America and the vast number of species available. It's exciting, often breathtaking, and I'm sure to the people who live in those areas,

they're the best places on earth. But home still creeps back into my thoughts. I might sit a blind in eastern Colorado on a mule deer hunt but think about what stand I plan to hunt when I get home, or on a bear hunt in Manitoba I'll be thinking about what fall food plots to plant and where to plant them.

Thoughts of home can also bring out the frustration of hunting a foreign place. At home, I would know when, where and how to hunt. But in the end, it's more than that, or maybe it's all that or possibly even something just out of reach. Home is where I fell in love with hunting and the outdoors, and where my dad mentored me to be a good hunter and good steward of the land.

It's where I introduced my daughters to hunting, creating a special bond between us, just as my dad and I have. It's where I can call upon and renew a lifetime of memories simply by walking a familiar path or stretch of creek. It's a place I have worked to make better through the investment of sweat, money and time, and somehow becomes a living canvas on which you paint. I suppose that's why of all the places I have hunted, I would not trade hunting the home farm for any of them. No, there's nothing wrong with going away from home on hunting adventures, and if you can do it, I recommend giving it a try.

But if not, that's OK, too, because in my opinion, there's nothing that compares to hunting the home place. 🍷



*The author shows off his monster caribou.*



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# New Imperial Whitetail

# BEETS & GREENS

## Raising the Bar on Brassica Diversity

**I**f you missed the announcement in the previous issue of *Whitetail News*, be sure not to miss this. Imperial Whitetail Beets & Greens is a new fall annual food plot product from the Whitetail Institute. It's a diverse blend of fast-growing turnips, beets and radishes that establish and grow quickly, provide lots of succulent foliage above ground, and also produce turnips, beets and radishes underground that will attract deer and provide them with food options from fall through winter. The key to Beets & Greens' performance is its forage components and the ratios in which they're blended. Attraction is maximized through the various food options offered within the same plot throughout the life of the stand.

### Forage Components and Performance

Designed for planting in late summer or fall, Beets & Greens is designed to provide deer with choices of multiple food sources in the same plot continuously from fall through winter. And as is the case with other Whitetail Institute seed blends, Beets & Greens includes forage components only available in Whitetail Institute products.

Each component of Beets & Greens has been carefully selected using a broad range of criteria, including attractiveness to deer, rapid establishment, prolific growth and abundant production, and then blended in precise ratios. Whitetail Institute testing has shown to maximize the performance of the stand.

Sugar beets are so high in sugar they're commercially grown throughout the world for sugar production. Sugar-beet tops are highly



attractive to deer immediately, offering them substantial levels of protein and carbohydrates they need for energy from fall to the late season and beyond.

Beets & Greens also contains Tall Time Turnip, the only turnip variety scientifically developed for food plots for deer. Tall Time Turnips produce abundant foliage and large, sweet tubers. The foliage provides variety with other brassicas in Beets & Greens, as they begin to attract deer during the early hunting season and become even sweeter with the first frosts of fall. The turnip tubers continue to attract deer and provide them with critical nutrition during winter.

Beets & Greens also includes the Whitetail Institute's proprietary kale variety, WINA 210K, which the Whitetail Institute developed according to the same stringent protocols followed in developing Tall Time Turnip. Some other types of kale are coarse and indigestible, produce tight heads instead of loose leaves, and don't grow quickly or tall. WINA 210K Kale suffers none of those drawbacks. It's a vegetable cultivar that grows large, individual leaves instead of a head, and the leaves are extremely attractive to deer.

The final component, WINA 412 Radish, helps maximize the attraction of the stand by adding variety to the forage and tuber offerings of the plot. WINA 412 Radish and Tall Time Turnip can also help improve soil quality in two ways. First, the turnip and radish tubers drill down as they grow, helping to aerate heavier, compacted soils. WINA 412 Radish, for example, produces tubers that can push several feet deep even into compacted clay soils and grow as thick as soft-drink bottles — much larger than the small, round radishes we commonly see in grocery stores. Second, any turnip and radish tubers remaining the next spring also add organic matter to the soil as they break down. The Whitetail Institute also coats Beets & Greens seeds with Rainbond to ensure seedling survival.

Rainbond absorbs up to 200 times its weight in moisture from the soil and keeps it next to the seeds as they sprout and grow.

Beets & Greens is available in 3-pound bags that will plant a half-acre, and 12-pound bags that will plant two acres. For more information, go to [whitetailinstitute.com](http://whitetailinstitute.com), or call (800) 688-3030. 🦌



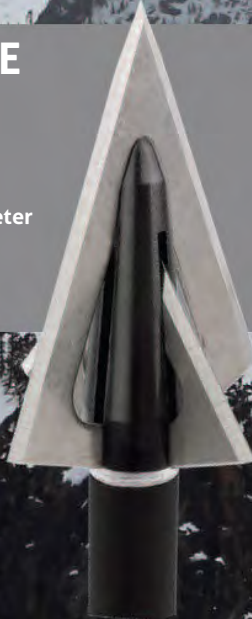


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# Site Fidelity Increases as Bucks Age

By Bob Humphrey

Photos by the Author

**R**iding to my Kansas box blind during a cold, dark December morning, I listened to my outfitter, Ted, go over the list of potential shooter bucks I should watch for.

"There's a good 10-point," he said. "He should be easy to recognize because he's pretty wide. I saw him one day when I was working on

the blind and even got a picture with my phone."

He handed me the photo, which was somewhat grainy but clear enough to tell the deer was definitely a shooter. I was amazed the buck had come close enough for a recognizable photo. Then I noticed something else.

"When did you take that picture?" I asked. "Oh, that was back in September," Ted said.

I didn't say anything, but doubt began to creep in.

I didn't see that buck or any other shooters the first day. He didn't show the next day, either, but a 3-year-old with a split main beam

*My outfitter told me to keep an eye out for this Kansas buck. I was a little skeptical at first, but he had the deer's home range dialed in.*





sorely tempted me in the waning moments of daylight. Had he been a year older, I would not have hesitated.

By the third morning, I was getting a bit discouraged until my mind wandered back to another Kansas hunt several years earlier. It was a November bowhunt, during which the outfitter also showed me pictures of bucks to watch for. And each time, I saw at least one of the target bucks.

"Maybe," I thought, "with the rut winding down, the wide-racked photo buck will return home."

My attention had been focused largely on a brushy draw in front of me, as that's where most of the previous deer sightings occurred, but every once in a while, I'd do a 360 to glass the open plains and rolling hills behind me. During one such perusal, something caught my eye in a small patch of low brush barely larger than a baseball diamond. A quick look through my Swarovski binoculars confirmed it was a set of antlers — big antlers — and another set of ears. Somehow, without me seeing them, a buck and doe had gone into the thicket and bedded down just more than 100 yards away. Admittedly, it took several minutes to regain enough composure to make the shot, but I did.

I was still marveling at the magnificent beast when Ted rolled up, walked over and said, "Yup, that's him. That's the buck I was hoping you would shoot." Looking at the buck again, I suddenly realized he was right. It was the buck in the picture. I also realized I shouldn't have been so skeptical about the possibility of the wayward whitetail returning home.

Site fidelity is a term biologists use for an animal's affinity for an area. After leaving its natal home range, a yearling buck searches for a new place to settle. It's nature's way of ensuring better genetic dis-

persal. However, wandering through unfamiliar territory, the buck is at one of the most vulnerable stages of his life. But if he finds an area with the right food, cover and water, and manages to survive hunting season, predators and winter, he'll be in much better shape the next fall. By then, he'll have had almost a full year to learn his home range. Then he can learn the patterns of hunters and predators that use the home range, and his chances of survival increase with each year.

Natural selection is the driving force behind physiology and behavior. In some habitats and for some species, it might be more advantageous to migrate, as with caribou, or to be nomadic, like pronghorns. The whitetail's best strategy is to stay home. The more familiar a deer is with its home range, the greater its chances of surviving to breed and pass along its genes.

A whitetail's home range is defined as the geographic area where that animal spends 90 to 95 percent of its time during the year, as determined by tracking deer with GPS satellite collars. I always found that definition a bit misleading because it implies where a deer will travel is determined by its home-range boundary, when the opposite is true. For me, it's clearer to define home range as the area in which a deer can be found 95 percent of the year. The home range is defined by the deer's annual movement, and cannot be determined until the year has passed and all data points plotted. In human terms, think of it as your home, neighborhood and place of work. The other five percent might be that week-long vacation in the Bahamas.

You've likely heard someone say the average home range of a whitetail is about one square mile, which is fairly reasonable. But you must remember that's an average. Depending on the quantity and quality of habitat components such as food, cover and water, not to mention



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potential breeding partners, home ranges can vary in size considerably. Some might be five or even 10 square miles; others a fraction of that.

That's a lot of ground for a hunter to cover, particularly if he's targeting one or a few bucks. Fortunately, deer don't use all areas of their home range with the same frequency. Within their home range is a core area wherein they spend more than half the year. And several studies have shown that for mature bucks, that might be only about 10 percent of their home range — possibly as few as 60 to 100 acres. Our core area might be our home or even one room in our home. There are some obvious selective advantages to this strategy. Familiarity gained from spending more time and gaining more experience in a smaller area improves a deer's ability to avoid danger there, and older deer become masters of learning and exploiting their home ranges.

You might think this concentrated activity would give hunters an edge. It does, and it doesn't. One obvious edge is that after you've located a buck's core, you can focus your time and energy there. Folks who hunt midwestern states such as Kansas, Iowa and Illinois have a distinct advantage. They actually have several advantages, but the biggest is that relatively open habitat makes it easier to observe deer. For the rest of us, and even for them, the most effective tool you can use is trail cameras. They can help you find and then hone in on core areas of the shooter bucks you seek. But... .

There's a saying among turkey hunters that "roosted ain't roasted." It means that just because you know where a gobbler sleeps that night doesn't mean you'll be able to kill that longbeard the next morning. Somewhat the same applies to deer, especially mature bucks.

I don't get much chance to hunt truly mature deer (4-1/2 years or older) on my home ground because hunting pressure prevents them from reaching that age, but my son and I found one a couple of years ago on our cameras. It's taken us several seasons to hone down his core area, and though our image frequency has increased, we have yet to see him during daylight. I guess that explains how he got old in such a heavily hunted area and also suggests some of the limitations.

One of the big disadvantages is that you must be extra cautious about minimizing your intrusion into core areas. If a tool box was stolen from your garage, you might not notice it for several days, but if someone put a new centerpiece on the table where you eat dinner every night, you'd pick up on it instantly. You're going into an area where a mature buck spends most of his time, and he's intimately familiar with it. Cause too much disturbance and several things could happen.

Studies show that with increased hunting pressure, deer don't necessarily leave an area. They just spend more time in thick cover and move less in daylight. And although they won't abandon their home ranges, they will shift core areas.

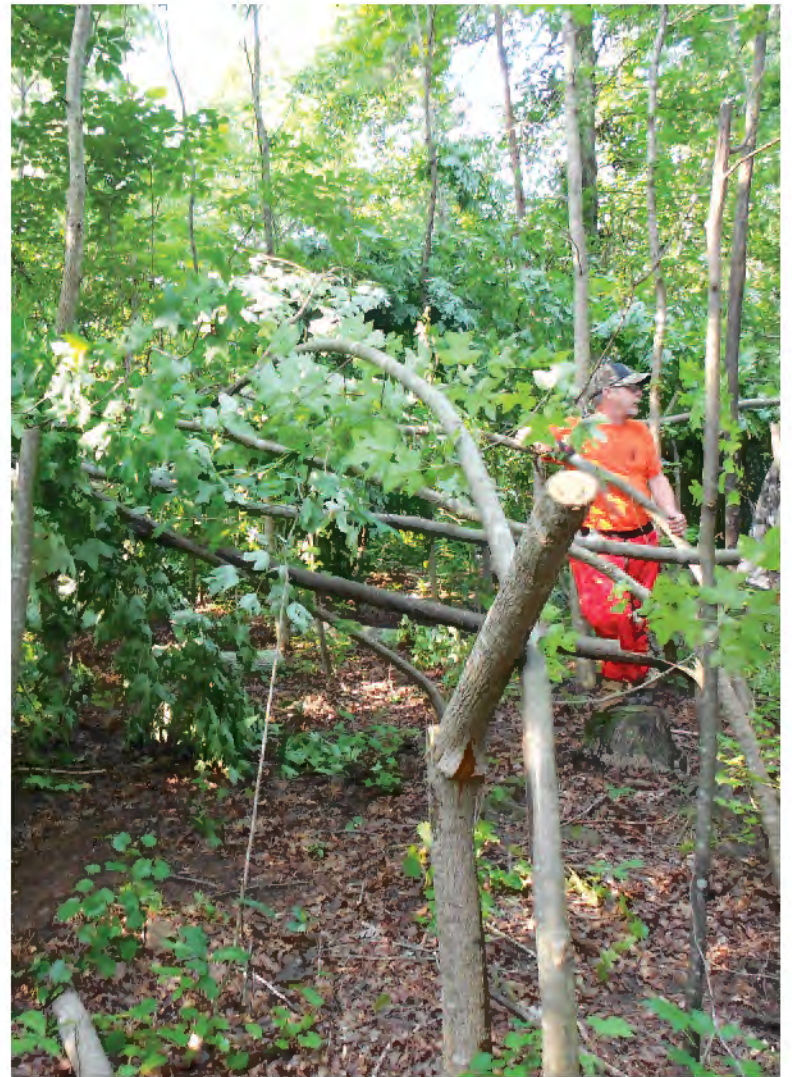
A better strategy might be to approach core areas the same way you approach bedding areas: by concentrating on the fringes. You wouldn't hang your stand in the middle of a bedding area. (Though there are exceptions to that rule.) Instead, you hunt edges, nearby travel corridors and feeding areas. You're still better off because knowing core-area locations helps you select which fringes, feeding areas and travel corridors to hunt.

Besides the active approach of finding core areas, you can also take a passive approach by making your ground more attractive as a potential core area, even on smaller parcels. One way is to minimize hunting pressure. Another is to improve the habitat.

A hunt I wrote about in a previous issue of Whitetail News provides a good example of both. It occurred in an area we hunt lightly but decided to give a full season off, effectively turning it into a sanctuary. The dense surrounding cover provides great bedding cover but is lacking in nutrition. Releasing a couple of wild apple trees and planting a small patch of Imperial Whitetail Clover tipped the balance. Pictures showed the area was being used regularly by three older bucks, and I took one the first afternoon I hunted the plot.

Creating or improving bedding cover with techniques such as hinge cuts can be an especially effective way to attract more concentrated activity. Deer spend most of the day in bed (we should be so lucky). If that bed is on your ground, it increases your chances of catching them on their feet and decreases your neighbor's odds.

Knowing older bucks show greater site fidelity is also one more reason to consider passing up sub-mature bucks. By the time they reach two and certainly three, a buck has probably settled into a core area. I found one a couple of years ago that seemed to have settled in on my ground and will turn four this year. And unlike the other big buck we've been chasing, this one comes out during the day — or at least he did this past year. 🦌



*You can increase the likelihood of your ground becoming a core area, by creating bedding cover and reducing human presence and hunting pressure.*



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# Whitetail Oats Plus

*Planning for the Expected (And the Unexpected)*

**W**hen you plant a food plot in fall, what do you expect to get from it? In most cases, the No. 1 reason folks plant fall food plots is to attract and hold deer for hunting season. Whitetail Oats Plus does that — in spades. When it comes to choosing a fall annual to plant, it ought to be sufficient that Whitetail Oats Plus attracts deer as well or better than you expect.







Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

Even so, Whitetail Oats Plus can do more — much more if you know how to take advantage of its versatility.

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### **The Expected: Attraction, Attraction, Attraction**

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The backbone of Whitetail Oats Plus is an oat variety the Whitetail Institute first heard about years ago, when one of its worldwide agriculture contacts told staffers about it. In Whitetail Institute testing, this variety proved to be more attractive to deer than any other oat the company had tested. The variety had initially been included with other oat varieties in a university research project comparing how well various oats performed as grain producers, but researchers had to “remove it from the tests and shelve it because deer browsed it so heavily.”

As you can imagine, the Whitetail Institute was immediately interested in exploring the oat variety’s potential as a deer forage. The company’s initial tests of the oat included evaluating its attractiveness to deer, how well it grew in various climates and other performance characteristics related to 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 food plot planting.

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

As excellent as the oat variety is by itself, the Whitetail Institute still wasn’t satisfied it had done everything to maximize food plot performance. So during the next six years, it continued to test Whitetail Oats by itself and blended with other forage varieties to design a Whitetail Oats-based food plot product that could max out performance. The result is the Plus in the product’s name: small amounts of winter wheat and triticale the Whitetail Institute included in Whitetail Oats Plus to enhance winter hardiness even more.

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### **The Unexpected**

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As mentioned, although Whitetail Oats Plus is a tremendous food plot product by itself, it can also do much more. You can also use it as a nurse crop when planting perennials in fall, which yields several benefits. First, Whitetail

Oats Plus germinates and grows quickly, and because it’s so attractive, it attracts deer to the plot soon after planting. Second, the fast growth and attractiveness characteristics of Whitetail Oats Plus help it shoulder some of the browsing pressure on the plot as the perennial sprouts and grows.

Third, planting a nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus with fall-planted perennials can be a great way to hedge your bets against a late-summer or early-fall drought. This is especially true when the perennial seeds planted are coated with the Whitetail Institute’s Rainbond seed coating. Rainbond serves several important functions, but for our purposes, the most important is it helps protect seeds from germinating until sufficient moisture is available in the soil to sustain the seedling. If you plant a nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus with fall-planted Whitetail Institute perennials but Mother Nature turns off the water, you’ll likely still be in good shape even if the drought is hard and long. In the worst-case scenario — if there isn’t even enough moisture in the soil to penetrate Rainbond and germinate the perennial seeds — you can still have a highly attractive plot of Whitetail Oats Plus to attract and hold deer until rains return.

Planting a nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus with a perennial in fall is easy. When planting the perennial, broadcast a light layer (30 to 45 pounds per acre) of Whitetail Oats Plus onto the disked or tilled seedbed right after putting out your fertilizer. Then, smooth the plot to lightly cover the fertilizer and oats. Finally, broadcast the perennial seed at its full seeding rate on top of the smoothed seedbed. (Editor’s note: An article on using Whitetail Oats Plus as a nurse crop appears in this issue on Page 38).

As with all Whitetail Institute forage products, the components and their ratios in Whitetail Oats Plus have been exhaustively developed and tested in real-world conditions across the United States and Canada to ensure that Whitetail Oats Plus is the best the company could make. 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 allows it to 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. Loamy to heavy soils are best. One 45-pound bag of Whitetail Oats Plus will plant up to a half acre.

For information about Whitetail Oats Plus or to order, visit [whitetailinstitute.com](http://whitetailinstitute.com), or call (800) 688-3030. 🍷





# THE GREATEST GIFT

By Scott Bestul

Photos by the Author

“THE BOY UNDERSTOOD LITTLE OF HIS CURRENT  
WORLD AND NOTHING OF THE LIFE AHEAD OF HIM,  
BUT HE KNEW THIS MUCH; HE WOULD BE A DEER  
HUNTER FOR THE REST OF HIS DAYS.”



**H**e was a skinny child, his bucked front teeth not yet straightened by the braces he wore. The boy was tall yet uncoordinated enough to “ride the pine” when his teams took the field or the court. He was too shy to flirt with girls yet too nervous to chat much with adults. When he took the time to think about things, his mind seemed to hover on the theme, “Where exactly do I fit in?”

He found the answer on a cold, snowy November day. The boy had wanted to be a deer hunter as long as he could remember. He’d listened to his father, uncles and cousins tell tales of bucks seen, shot at and tagged in the timber homesteaded by his great-grandfather many years ago. The boy had dreamed lots of dreams that had never come true, and all he could do was hope that somehow this would be different.

So, he followed his dad into the pre-dawn woods after a sleepless night. The boy had no idea what it took to be a deer hunter, and the imagining of it had kept him awake. He couldn’t recall ever feeling so excited about something he knew almost nothing about. The sting of the cold on his cheeks and the squeak of snow under his boots seemed amplified, and though he knew dawn was not far away, the woods seemed black and forbidding. He was trailing his father so closely that when his dad stopped by a granite boulder, the boy nearly crashed into his back.

“Sit here,” his father whispered, scraping snow off the flat-topped stone. “Face that direction and be as still as you can. I’ll come get you before too long. If you need to find me, follow my tracks in the snow.”

The boy nodded. By the time he had placed a padded seat on the stone the forest had swallowed all sight and sound of his father. He was completely alone but somehow not scared. An owl hooted softly from some nearby pines, and a distant, too-early shot echoed through the woods — the only sounds he heard. He closed his eyes and soaked up the silence until the woods started to brighten. The small grove of pines in front of the rock butted against a block of hardwoods. Remembering his father’s words, he focused his gaze on that edge. The snow was disturbed there, and he thought it looked like deer tracks but was too afraid to walk over and look. The only things clear to him were that he had to sit as still as he could, and that if he shot at a deer, he was supposed to aim for the shoulder. So he sat.

By the time the sun hit the treetops, he’d heard shooting all around him. The boy had not seen a deer and was convinced he was in the wrong spot. The coldness of the rock had soaked through his insulated seat, and his toes seemed numb. He could no longer resist the urge to crane his neck, swivel his shoulders and trace little circles on his gun stock with a finger. He saw his father’s tracks in the snow clearly, and they beckoned him to hop off the stone and follow. The only thing that stopped him was guilt. He was only 12 but already hated the shame of quitting, so he stared at his shotgun to distract himself.

When he looked up, a doe was staring at him. Her body was ob-

scured by a pine and she had appeared so suddenly and silently that she could have come from the sky. The doe bobbed her head and stomped her foot, and the boy’s heart sank. He was sure she was about to run, and it was his fault for fidgeting so much. But suddenly, she snapped her head to stare behind her, and when the boy followed her gaze, he saw a white rack weaving through the pines toward them. He didn’t remember shouldering the gun, but when the deer emerged from cover, the bead on his barrel was making jerky circles on the buck’s shoulder. There might have been a time when his heart beat faster and harder, but he couldn’t remember it.

When he pulled the trigger nothing happened. Then he remembered the safety and clicked it off. By then, the buck was staring at him, but it was too late. When the boy shot, the buck’s knees buckled, and then he tried to walk, but his legs collapsed, and he collapsed on his side in the snow. Remembering his training, the boy clicked the safety back on and walked on numb feet to stand over the buck. Its rack was so perfect and white against the dark fur of the buck that the boy felt he must be dreaming.

Then, his father appeared from behind him to bring him to a new reality. The boy understood little of his current world and nothing of the life ahead of him, but he knew this much; he would be a deer hunter the rest of his days. When his father shook his hand, it seemed like the first time he had felt part of something big, important and mysterious; a kind of fraternity that elected only a special few.

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## The Magical Moments

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The boy in that story is, of course, me. I have enough gray on my noggin that I’ve forgotten many days in my life, but that will never be one of them. It happened 45 seasons ago, and I remember details of that morning with stunning clarity. I recognize that shooting your first deer isn’t a seminal moment in everyone’s life, but it was in mine, shaping who I was, how I thought about things and, ultimately, where I lived and how I made my living.

Like many deer hunters, I’ve tried to introduce other people to the activity that has meant so much to me. Interestingly, as I prepared to take others hunting for the first time, I realized that my opening-day story was not going to hook many of the youngsters and first-timers of today. Think about it: I was a clueless youngster sitting on a cold rock on a freezing morning, with no direct supervision beyond the warning to sit tight and be still. Try that with a child today, and he’d be calling his mom on his cell phone within minutes, saying his mentor had abandoned him to freeze to death.

I might be exaggerating, but not by much. Back in the dark ages of my youth, you could give me or any of my buddies a sharp stick and a chunk of woods, and we’d entertain ourselves for hours. Today’s youngsters have more competition for their time, attention and souls. Whether this sea-change is good, bad or something different is moot. It is, as the old and irritating saying goes, what it is. We simply have to accept that the more we make hunting fun, exciting and rewarding, the better the chance we have of hooking a child for life. Here are a few thoughts on making that happen.

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## Take Baby Steps

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Sometimes, getting a newbie into deer hunting is as simple as asking, “Hey, wanna go deer hunting?” That works with children that have some inkling of interest and experience in the outdoors. But if



*The author's sister, Jo Schultz, shot her first buck — a Minnesota 8-point — when she was nearly 50. Many states recognize the importance of recruiting new hunters from the ranks of non-hunting adults and offer special hunts and reduced license fees to bring them into our ranks.*



your charge is a child raised on concrete and skyrides, a gentler, more gradual introduction is probably in order. Remember, much of modern deer hunting involves a lot of sitting and waiting — something many children (and heck, most adults) don't often practice.

That makes stepping gradually into the outdoor world a logical choice. If a youngster barely knows the natural world, take him fishing first — or hunting mushrooms, picking berries, target shooting or even just a few nice hikes in the timber. Despite their seeming obsession with technology and everything uber-paced, most children still have an innate curiosity about and fascination for the natural world.

This might seem like a lengthening of the process, but actually, most of us — me included — started “hunting” things a lot smaller than deer, and our obsession with all things outdoors started pretty simply. I was bare-handing frogs and toads with my boyhood buddies years before I ever thought about pulling the trigger on a deer. Family camping trips taught me the slower pace of the natural world. Fishing for bluegills with a worm and bobber was a high-action sport with lots of success, and hunting birds and small game served as a stepping stone to bigger stuff. In our haste to make a child a deer hunter, it's easy to forget the ladder we all climbed to the world of whitetails.

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### Set Up for Success

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When it is finally time to get a child on a deer, it's wise to think about that first hunt pretty carefully. Most states now have special

youth hunts; seasons set aside for the youngsters. In northern states, they usually occur before the general firearms season, when the weather is a little milder, and that's a great thing. Children of my generation seemed to take numb hands and feet as par for the course, but given our choice, we'd still rather be comfy than cold. Why hold this generation to a different standard?

It's also wise to make a youngster's first hunts as action-packed as possible. I'm willing to grind out hours in a stand where I might only see one special buck in a half-dozen sits, but I wouldn't subject a newcomer to those hours of boredom. Instead, I'd opt for a comfortable blind on the edge of a food plot being visited by multiple deer. And although it's hip to whine about our children and their fascination (OK, obsession) with phones, video games and electronic media I'm blissfully unaware of, I have zero problem with a youngster entertaining himself until deer show up. Just be sure to point out the little awesome sights that occur in even the slowest hunts.

Finally (and most important in my book), be sensitive to the mood and interest level of your trainee. When they show signs of extreme boredom or come right out and say it's time to quit, well, it's time to quit. I remember taking my son, Bailey, on his first deer hunt. We played the waiting game at a couple of deerless spots that morning. When I sensed he was getting fidgety and restless, I asked if he'd like to take a little walk. Bailey's eyes lit up a bit, so I led a little nature walk down a scenic logging road. We laughed at chattering squirrels, whacked puffballs with a walking stick, and I pointed out the rubs



and scrapes made by the bucks we weren't seeing. Months later, I read an essay Bailey wrote for a school assignment about an adventurous walk he took with his dad one day. His description of that simple walk brought tears to my eyes, and I remain grateful that I didn't force him to sit to the point of boredom, waiting for the appearance of some dumb deer.

## Think Outside the Box

Most of the attention given to hunter recruitment focuses on youngsters, but there's a demographic out there ripe for our picking: adults who have never hunted before. Survey after survey proves that most non-hunting Americans approve of hunting if meat (not antlers) is the main focus. And with the growing foodie movement, more adults recognize that hunting is an excellent way of procuring pure, healthy meat. What source of protein, I wonder, is more free-range than a whitetail deer?

Some states have recognized this untapped potential and are committed to recruiting adult newcomers. Wisconsin, for example, offers steep discounts (even to nonresidents) for first-time deer license buyers, as well as Learn to Hunt programs that pair experienced mentors with rookie adults interested in experiencing their first whitetail season. Although several other states have recognized the importance of harvesting this low-hanging fruit, more need to join the program.

Individually, we should be on the alert for any adult friends or family members who show even the slightest interest in hunting. Years ago, I painted houses for a living and my boss — several years my senior — always listened intently when I or another painter told a hunt-

ing tale. Noting his interest, I asked George why he'd never taken up our sport. "Well I just wasn't raised in a hunting family, and none of the guys I knew that hunted ever asked me to go." And what did I do? Following the performance of every other hunter George had known, I never took the time to teach him something he was clearly interested in. Shame on me.

Whenever I doubt the potential of this often-untapped crop of new hunters, I simply think of my sister. Jo, raised in an obviously hunting household, was a borderline anti-hunter for much of her life. I vividly remember her scorning me for "catching pretty animals, grinding them up, and eating them" throughout my teenage years. Jo mellowed a bit as she grew up, but then an outright miracle happened: She married a guy who not only hunted deer, ducks and turkeys but happily ate them. Now Jo is one of us, hunting at every season and asking me for new venison recipes now and then. Every time I think of her dropping a hammer on a buck or gobbler, I think, "How many more like her are out there, and we just haven't reached them yet?"

## Conclusion

As the old saying reminds us, "You can only kill your first deer once." But it's easy, in these days of relative whitetail abundance, to forget the truth of that saying, to diminish its importance. The shooting of that first whitetail — whether it's an antlered buck or the smallest fawn on a property — cannot only change an individual life but also keep our time-honored traditions alive. We should go out of our way, individually and as a brotherhood, to make it happen as often as we can and celebrate heartily whenever it occurs. 🦌



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## Our Dozen-a-Day Lesson: Soil Acidity and Liming

**A**s a 10-year-old, piano lessons were obligatory and torture. Part of this inhumane rite of passage were the warm-up lessons “Dozen a Day” — repetitious monotony.

I hope readers do not judge repeated discussions of soil acidity and the importance of liming with the same degree of contempt. The fact is, soil acidity is a universally persistent problem in food plots and limits productivity. Further, soil acidity is easily corrected with limestone, making the continual problem even more perplexing.

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### What is Soil Acidity, and Why is it Relevant?

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Soil acidity is the quantity of hydrogen ions in the soil. In the eastern and central United States, soils tend to be acidic, even in a natural and undisturbed state. The problem comes with our land-use patterns, which exacerbate the natural acidic tendency. The mineral structure of most soils has limited buffering capacity, and any form of soil dis-



*Bulk dolomitic limestone (a combination of calcium carbonate and magnesium carbonate) has the texture of slightly moistened beach sand.*

turbance — such as fire, timber harvest or long-term tillage — removes the limited buffering capacity. As a result, soils quickly become more acidic.

Acidity is expressed as pH, with values ranging from 0 (very acidic) to 14 (very alkaline). The pH value is a negative logarithm, which mathematically means that soil acidity differs by a power of 10. The target soil pH varies slightly among soil types and crops but is about 6.5-7.0. A soil with a pH value of 4.5 is 100 times more acidic than a soil with the ideal pH of 6.5.

Acidic soils are an indication of soil infertility. Chemically, acidic conditions alter the chemical form of important soil nutrients, making those elements unavailable to crops; that is, nutrient starvation. Acidic soils also alter other naturally occurring elements in the soil, making them toxic to crops, with aluminum being the major culprit. I distinctly remember a classmate asking an instructor about the major reason why acidic soils affect crop growth, and he quickly responded that aluminum toxicity was the major reason — that is, poisoning.

Soil acidity has an additional insidious effect on forage legumes such as clover and alfalfa. Legumes have the unique ability to capture and use nitrogen from the atmosphere (actually in air spaces in the soil) for plant growth. This is done with a symbiotic relationship between nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil and legume roots. Acidic soils inhibit the survival and efficiency of the symbiotic bacteria, affecting growth of forage legumes. How much growth reduction? I have seen in the agricultural scientific literature a report of a 28-time yield increase in limed alfalfa compared to alfalfa grown in a non-limed, highly acidic soil. This is why properly limed soils are essential for food plots planted to forage legumes such as Imperial Whitetail Clover and Alfa-Rack Plus.

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### Correcting Soil Acidity

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Neutralizing soil acidity is fairly straightforward. Common neutralizing soil amendments are carbonates (limestone), oxides and hydroxides. These materials are combined with calcium or magnesium, which are often incorrectly thought to neutralize soil acidity. Calcium and magnesium are essential elements for plant growth, but do not directly neutralize soil acidity. Carbonates, oxides and hydroxides are the chemical agents that neutralize soil acidity. Consider calcium and magnesium to be carriers of the actual neutralizing agent.

Which is best to neutralize soil acidity in food plots: carbonates, oxides or hydroxides? Carbonates offer the best combination of cost, chemical reactivity, widespread availability and ease of use. Carbonates include calcitic limestone (calcium carbonate) and dolomitic limestone (a mixture of calcium carbonate and magnesium carbonate). In





*This is the distribution mechanism of a lime spreader. Notice the conveyor chain that moves dolomitic limestone out of the hopper. The dolomitic limestone falls onto a pair of circular, rotating distributors that spread the material in a wide swath. The hydraulic system of the tractor powers this spreader.*

the context of neutralizing soil acidity, there is no real difference between calcitic limestone and dolomitic limestone. Both are naturally occurring, and the material locally available is often based on which type is mined in the closest limestone quarry. In commercial agricultural regions, limestone is sold in bulk and stored at dealers in massive outdoor piles. Bulk limestone is sold as a blend of particles of varying size. Smaller particles quickly react to neutralize soil acidity. Larger particles take longer to react, extending the length of neutralization. Consider the particle size blend to be an ad-hoc form of time release. This is why farmers typically lime about every three years.

Limestone is also sold in bags at home-improvement stores, mainly for use in home gardens, lawns or landscape areas. Bagged products contain finely ground limestone that has been pelleted for ease of homeowner application. The coating is water soluble, releasing the finely ground limestone that quickly neutralizes acidic soils. This sounds good at face value, but the uniform fine texture equates to short-term neutralization, and bagged limestone costs significantly more than bulk limestone. However, I can think of food plot scenarios where bagged, pelleted limestone is a wise choice, assuming the user is willing to accept the higher cost.

Pound for pound, oxides and hydroxides are the most efficient and quick-acting materials to neutralize soil acidity. However, they are potential irritants to handlers and overall difficult to apply. Further, their quick-acting properties mean very short-term neutralization. These disadvantages largely outweigh the advantages of neutralization efficiency, but perhaps oxides and hydroxides are viable options in some extreme situations.

From time to time, I'm included in discussions on using liquid or sprayable formulations of limestone on food plots. Sprayable limestone is a slurry of ultra-fine limestone particles in water. It will neutralize acidic soils quickly but no quicker than applying dry limestone of the same particle size. Because of uniform small particle size, the benefits of sprayable limestone are short-lived, just like dry fine limestone. However, I do not recommend sprayable limestone because of limitations of commonly used sprayers. Sprayable limestone is often used for hydromulching/seeding operations that have trash pumps to

spray dense slurries of solids (seeds, fertilizer, mulching materials) in large volumes of water (thousands of gallons per acre) with aggressive mechanical agitation in the tank. A typical ATV- or tractor-mounted sprayer cannot generate the necessary output for sprayable limestone and does not have adequate agitation to maintain suspension in the spray tank. Additionally, spraying heavy slurries using an ATV sprayer can destroy the pump. For food plots, dry liming materials are the practical choice.

Despite the straightforward solutions to soil acidity, liming acidic soils in food plots remains a monumental obstacle. Why? One reason might be the rapid turnover of hunting property and reluctance to invest in a long-term solution. But, there are quick-acting liming materials for those situations. I believe the major reason why liming acidic soils remains challenging is the sheer volume of liming materials needed to adequately neutralize soil acidity. Limestone rates are usually expressed in tons per acre. It's difficult to procure and transport bulk materials to remote food plot sites. Additionally, small-scale food plot equipment is not suited to apply large amounts of bulk limestone. As a result, food plots are often under-limed and over-fertilized in an attempt to compensate for soil acidity causing nutrient starvation. This is wasteful in terms of unfulfilled food plot potential and overuse of expensive fertilizer.

The solution to these logistical obstacles is smart management and planning. Bulk limestone is affordable and can be stockpiled at remote sites for future use. Small-scale equipment can be used to successfully apply liming materials, but it will be slow-going because of the volume of liming materials applied. Plan on extra time to apply liming materials. Even better, hire a commercial applicator to spread limestone.

When I was an undergraduate student at Auburn University in the mid-1970s, all students in every major in the College of Agriculture (this includes pre-med and pre-vet students) were required to take an introductory soils class taught by a distinguished professor, Dr. Joe Hood. Much of the lecture was spent on soil acidity. Every biological system from crop production to wildlife to orchard crops is affected by soil acidity. This illustrates the fundamental importance of managing soil acidity, including in food plots. 🍁



# Variety Maximizes 'Flavour' and Power of Food Plots

By Jon Cooner

Photos by Charles J. Alsheimer



**M**ost of us have heard the old saying, “Variety is the spice of life.” Actually, the full quote is, “Variety’s the very spice of life, that gives it all its flavour.” The author, William Cowper, wrote that line in 1785, so it’s doubtful he intended it as advice for food plotters. It applies nonetheless, because planting a variety of carefully selected forages can maximize how well and for how long food plots can attract deer.

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## Attractiveness to Deer: The Bedrock of Forage Selection

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When folks plant food plots, it’s usually to attract deer and hold them on their properties. Many factors influence our success at achieving both parts of that goal, including food plot location, food plot structure and forage selection. Consider, though, that food plot location and structure only affect how safe deer feel using a food plot, and those factors are irrelevant if deer aren’t attracted to the food plot initially. That’s why forage selection is the most important major factor in making sure your food plots can attract and hold deer.

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## Forages for Maximum Sustained Attraction

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Let’s start the step-by-step process of choosing forages for our forage group that will best attract deer and hold them on our property. Below, you’ll find a list of the steps to maximize the attraction and holding power of your food plots.

**Step 1: Is the forage highly attractive to deer?** The first step in making sure your variety of forages will attract deer is to consider only those that are highly attractive. If you’re wondering why I bothered to say something so obvious, it’s because attractiveness to deer isn’t the only factor we must consider if we also want our vari-





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ety of forages to hold deer on our property and attract more. We'll start addressing that with the second factor.

**Step 2: During what part(s) of the year is the forage at its most attractive to deer?** You'll need to consider the purpose for which you'll be planting each plot, such as attracting deer specifically during fall and winter, attracting them and providing an abundant source of protein for antler growth during spring and summer, or providing highly attractive, nutritious food year-round.

Almost everyone plants at least some of their food plots specifically to attract and hold deer during hunting season, so we'll use that as our example. Let's assume hunting season in your area runs from Oct. 1 through December. That means that any forage to be included in your forage group should be at its most attractive to deer during those months. Summer beans and peas satisfy the first factor, as they're highly attractive to deer. But they're generally killed by the first frosts of fall, so they might not be the best options for a October-through-December hunting plot in most areas of the country. In contrast, good options would include oats for the early season and, later, some varieties of brassica. In the same vein, oats and brassica wouldn't be the best options for a food plot intended to provide abundant protein for deer during spring and summer.

**Step 3: How long does the forage remain in a highly attractive state?** This is where we really start getting beyond the initial matter of attracting deer and into the broader goal of holding the deer we initially attract and continuing to attract more.

Even the most attractive forage won't help hold the deer we initially attracted and attract more if it's only attractive for a brief period. That's why you should also consider how quickly the forage can grow, whether it stays highly palatable if it matures and whether it can tolerate heat, drought and cold.

After you've completed these steps, you will have chosen forages that are attractive and at their most attractive stage when you need them to be. By doing so, you've already pushed the attractiveness and holding power of your food plots beyond the basics. Even so, there's still a lot of room at the top of the attraction ladder. If you want to push the attraction and holding power of your plots as far as possible, move to Step 4.

**Step 4: Determine which of the forages you've selected can be planted together to maximize the attraction and holding power of the plot.** I'm going to give away two of the secrets for the exceptional performance of Whitetail Institute's seed products. Here's the first: No matter how good a single plant variety is as a forage for deer, a carefully researched and tested blend of complementary forages will almost always outperform it.

That's why almost all Whitetail Institute food plot products are blends of complementary forage types. The only exception is Chic Magnet, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory, which started as and remains a component in other Whitetail Institute seed blends and was only later separately packaged as a single variety product.

Again, I'm not talking about just throwing various seeds into a spreader and planting them. There is a lot more to it than that, at least

if you want to realize the full benefits a properly formulated seed blend offers. The forages to be combined must be carefully selected based on their ability to provide top performance in many categories related to initial and sustained attraction. As mentioned, these include attractiveness to deer, rapid establishment, early seedling vigor, nutritional content and tolerance of heat, drought and cold.

**Step 5: The final forage components you selected in Step 4 must be combined with each other in ratios that provide maximum performance.** That's bad news and good news. The bad news is that the only way you'll be able to do that with great attention to detail is to put the seeds together in different ratios, plant them in real-world conditions and then observe the results to determine which deer prefer and that show the best ability to tolerate a wide range of planting and growing conditions.

The good news is that you don't have to do that yourself. And that's the second Whitetail Institute secret: The components of each Whitetail Institute seed product are blended in the exact component ratios that Whitetail Institute testing has shown to be optimum, and testing continues on existing products to make sure they are improved anytime the Whitetail Institute finds a way to do so.

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## Multiple Whitetail Institute Products in The Same Site?

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Hopefully you see some of the reasons why Whitetail Institute food plot blends perform at industry-leading levels. When it comes to providing a variety of food sources in one plot, the Whitetail Institute has already done the hard work for you. Most of our customers already understand the benefits properly developed seed blends offer because our in-house consultants regularly receive calls from customers asking questions about planting more than one Whitetail Institute seed product at the same site. In some cases, doing so can boost attraction even more, if it's done the right way.

There are two most-important issues presented by planting two or more forage products at the same site. First, make sure the two (or more) forages you select are optimum for the equipment accessibility, soil type and other conditions of the site. You can easily do that by going through the product selector at [whitetailinstitute.com](http://whitetailinstitute.com) for each site, one at a time. Second, if possible, perform a laboratory soil test, preferably a few months before planting, to determine your lime and fertilizer requirements. One of the beauties of the Whitetail Institute laboratory soil test kit is the sample-submission form that comes with each kit. It lets you specify and get lime and fertilizer recommendations for up to two Whitetail Institute products per kit.

**Planting side by side.** If you plan to plant two or more Whitetail Institute products at the same food plot, it's better in most cases (we'll cover exceptions later) to plant them side by side instead of trying to mix the seeds together or otherwise plant the products with one another. One reason goes back to what I said about seed ratios: The Whitetail Institute has already done the hard work of identifying the optimum ratios for each component in each product, and if you combine two or more products, those ratios will change. Second, if you mix two products together, you'll need to adjust the seeding rates so





you don't put out too much seed and potentially crowd the available root space in the plot. Finally, remember why we're planting multiple products at the same site: to increase variety. Arguably, the contrast created by planting two dissimilar products side by side presents the impression of variety even better.

**Planting in the same seedbed.** There are two instances in which planting two or more Whitetail Institute food plot products in the same seedbed is a dynamite idea: when planting a nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus with fall-planted perennials, and to increase the attraction and longevity of attraction in PowerPlant stands. You'll find an article on Whitetail Oats Plus as a nurse crop in this issue on Page 38.


**The special case of PowerPlant.** A somewhat similar theory can also be applied to extend PowerPlant's usefulness beyond its primary purpose, providing abundant high-protein forage for spring and summer, so it can double as an incredible harvest plot during the early season.

PowerPlant is one of the Whitetail Institute's most successful products. In fact, it's so successful that it remains the only food plot product the Whitetail Institute sells strictly as an annual food plot product for spring and summer. Its main forage components include summer beans and peas, which produce abundant high-protein foliage during spring and summer until they are killed off by the first frosts. Because of larger recommended plot sizes for PowerPlant and its unique structure, adding the variety of a fall annual to an established PowerPlant plot in late summer can make an excellent kill setup for early fall.

For PowerPlant plot sizes, the Whitetail Institute recommends a minimum of one acre planted in 25 pounds of PowerPlant seed for areas of low to moderate deer density, and 1.5 acres planted in 50 pounds of PowerPlant seed for areas of higher deer density. These plot sizes, when coupled with how tall (about six feet) and thick PowerPlant grows, result in deer using PowerPlant as a food source and bedding area.

**A killer PowerPlant setup.** To add variety to a PowerPlant stand for fall, find a stand location on the downwind (based on your most commonly prevailing wind direction during hunting season) corner or edge of the plot. Then, in late summer, mow a few lanes through the PowerPlant radiating out from the stand like the spokes of a bicycle wheel so you can see down them. Be sure that you don't remove so much of the PowerPlant that you destroy its attractiveness to deer as a bedding area. Then, when your fall planting dates arrive, lightly till the PowerPlant clippings into the lanes, and then plant the lanes with a Whitetail Institute fall annual such as Pure Attraction, No-Flow, Tall Tine Tubers, Winter-Greens or Beets & Greens. For even greater variety, consider planting a different Whitetail Institute fall annual in each lane.

This setup yields two benefits. First, the fall annual will help the plot continue to attract and hold deer long after the PowerPlant has run its course. During the early season, when the PowerPlant is still standing, though, deer will step out from the PowerPlant into the lanes throughout the day, making for a killer harvest plot.

Again, this isn't to suggest that you have to plant two or more Whitetail Institute food plot products at every site. Far from it. It's just another idea for you to add to your toolbox of tricks to make your property even more attractive to deer. 

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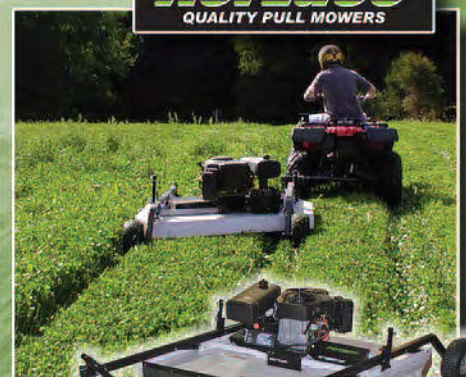
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# REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

about Whitetail Institute products...



Our area is not known for trophy bucks. Someone would luck-up and kill something out of the ordinary once in a lifetime. But, usually a scrawny 8-point with small horns is all we could kill. A typical deer in our area was around 100 to 115 inches of antler and weighed around 150 pounds.

We started planting Imperial Whitetail Clover about six to eight years ago. The results have been unreal. Now, with the nutrition of the Imperial Whitetail Clover and the continued use of it over the years, our deer have blossomed in antler size and body weight. Since the introduction of the new Extreme, it is even better. Extreme is very useful in our area because of the droughts that we have. Now, we are killing deer that average 130 inches of antler. The body weights have also increased to an average of 200 pounds.

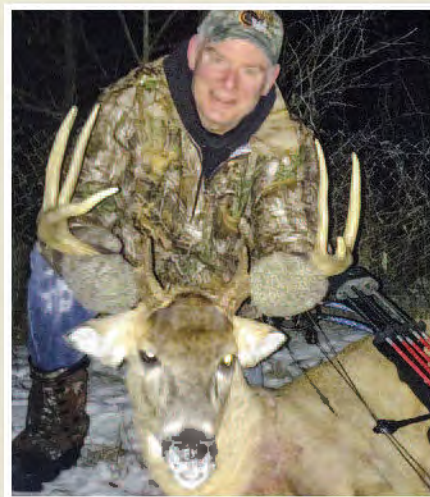
It was December 26, last year. I had been sitting in a shooting house for several hours. There were several does in the field and a nice shooter 9-point with double eye-guards. I noticed the big 9-point turn and look in the direction he came from and I caught a glimpse of antlers. The big buck walked out into our clover field and began eating. I couldn't believe it. He was out in the daylight. I expected to wake up any moment and find this was all a dream. After what seemed like eternity, and fumbling to get my gun, he turned broadside and I had a perfect shot. I shot him at 150 yards. He ran around 30 yards and fell dead. My dream had come true! I just couldn't believe I had killed such a massive buck for our area.

This was the biggest buck that I had ever killed in Tennessee. He scored 148 inches and had a body weight of 225 pounds. I never thought a deer this size could ever be killed in our area. All the hard work that my family and I put in to grow deer and let the little bucks go finally paid off. The use of Imperial Whitetail Clover and Extreme helped make it possible.

*Doug Robbins - Tennessee*

I planted a food plot of Imperial Whitetail Clover in September. It was a small plot but it had good deer sign in and around it. I put up some trail cameras to see if I could get a glimpse of a good buck coming through. A couple of weeks later, I checked my cameras and saw a couple of six-pointers and some nice does. I could hardly wait until opening weekend of rifle season. I got in my stand way before daylight. It was a very cold and rainy morning. I was all nestled down in my chair and a doe walked out at 7:30 am. I watched her feeding around for about 20 minutes in that clover food plot. She kept looking in the woods behind her and I said to myself, "All right, here comes big boy." I watched her for the longest. Through my scope, I searched up and down that food plot line of the woods that she was watching. And then I caught a glimpse of what I thought was a limb move. But it wasn't a limb. It was the antlers of a big, mature buck. All I needed him to do was take one more step forward. He did so and I pulled the trigger. He ran across the shooting lane and into the woods so I gave him some time and the search began. And so did the rain. It was 30 degrees and pouring rain which means all the blood trail would wash away. I searched for this buck for an hour in the pouring rain, freezing to death and, finally, I found him laying on the road 50 yards to the right of my stand. He was a 13-pointer. That's a morning hunt I will never forget!

*Linda Pery - Louisiana*



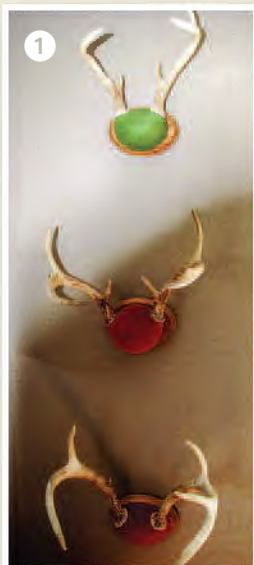
I got my first buck of my life hunting over a Whitetail Oats Plus food plot that I had planted in the middle of the small woods behind my house.

The deer had been mowing down the oats and I got a ton of nighttime photos of a nice buck. When the weather turned cold, he started showing up earlier in the day. On my last chance of the season, in the last few seconds of visible light, I was able to put an arrow in him.

I have some plans for expanding my food plot strategy next year, so I'll be in touch with Whitetail Institute.

*Paul Crave - Wisconsin*





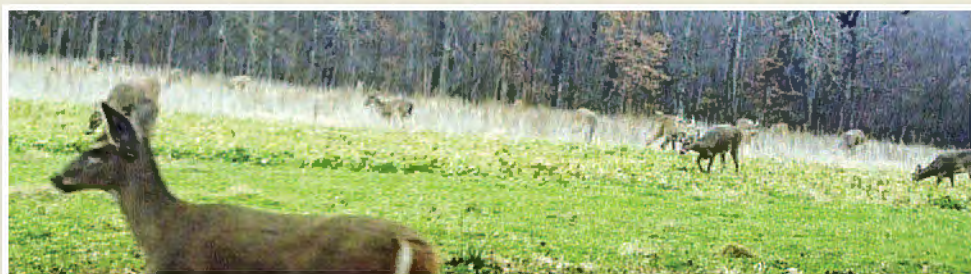
I have a small piece of land. About 60 acres. But, for this area it's on the large side. We are challenged with fairly high hunting pressure, limited space for people to hunt and, unfortunately, some neighbors who are anti-hunting. However, despite this, we do pretty well. A lot of the credit goes to the great products the Whitetail Institute provides. Pennsylvania implemented antler restrictions a few years ago. We started practicing it about five years before that and put a higher focus on doe management

as well. Whitetail Institute products help our herd grow healthy and strong and help keep them coming back on my property more consistently. I attached some pictures of the improvement over the last ten years in our deer herd with before-and-after pictures.

Picture 1 shows three racks from my property before we started our food plot and 30-06 Mineral Supplement efforts. They were not very impressive. The bottom two bucks in Picture 2 were before and the two on top of Picture 2 are more recent. Picture 3 also shows more recent bucks. I have been very fortunate to be consistently successful the last decade or so. Last year, during bow season, I unfortunately missed a 160ish-inch class buck. It would have been my biggest yet. Hopefully, I will get another opportunity at him this year!

Again, thanks Whitetail Institute for your great products and help!

*Tom Hardy - Pennsylvania*



It was nothing to see 20 to 30 deer on this field as the Illinois deer population tries coming back. Areas within one mile from us are not seeing many deer. We did not have that problem close to our food plots. It turned to a waiting game as to which buck would come out. We took six great bucks this year and we still have some shooters that we couldn't get cracks at. But I know they are not going anywhere with the food we have and all the girls they will need.

The time, hard work, and money spent has paid off again. Not only are we seeing good numbers of deer, the quality has continued to get better. Enclosed is a photo that shows what our food plots look like full of deer. Other hunters are asking, "What is the secret?" I tell them Whitetail Institute products.

Thanks again, Whitetail Institute. I hope the fun continues.

*Bill Boeschen - Illinois*



Every year for more than 10 years, my father and I have used many Whitetail Institute seeds and 30-06 Mineral and Cutting Edge Supplements. We own 63 acres in southern Ohio. Whitetail Institute products do a fantastic job keeping a healthy deer herd on our acreage. More years than not, we are both able to take a 120 to 140-inch deer and several healthy does. This year, I took my first ever December bow-kill. This familiar buck made a dangerous habit of chowing down on Winter-Greens. Thanks so much Whitetail Institute.

*Adam Fry - Ohio*



My wife, Rhonda Wilhelmi, killed this 14-point buck (gross 166 inches) during the first shotgun season over Winter-Greens. I have found that Winter-Greens for December hunting is fantastic. The deer pile into them. They stand up excellent and the deer will eat leaf, stems, and turnips in the mixture throughout the winter. I handseed and the green coating makes it easy to see how thickly I am spreading with my handseeder. Whitetail Institute products are hands-down way above all others.

*David Wilhelmi - Iowa*

(Continued on page 42)



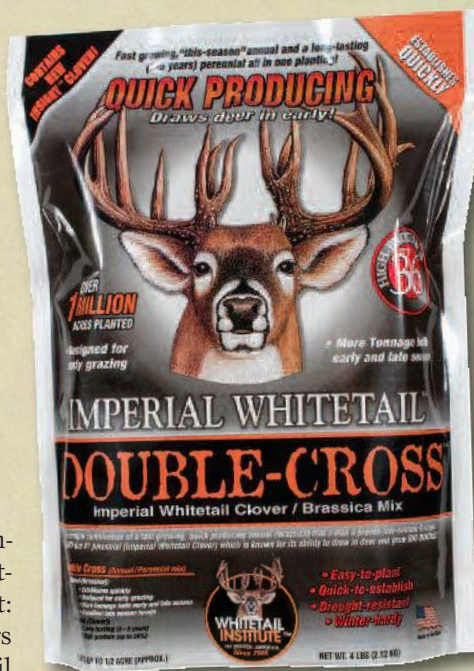
# Imperial Whitetail

## Double-Cross

### An Unbeatable Combo of Annuals and Perennials



**I**mperial Whitetail Double-Cross combines Imperial Whitetail Clover with Whitetail Institute annual brassicas. The result is an unbeatable combination of the best aspects of annual and perennial forages. It offers the best of both worlds.



The perennial component of Double-Cross, Imperial Whitetail Clover, is the No. 1 food plot planting in the world, and the reason is no secret: Imperial Whitetail Clover contains the only clovers scientifically designed for food plots for whitetail deer. It's highly attractive to deer as soon as it emerges, provides high levels of protein for deer year-round, is designed to last for years from one planting, and is cold, heat and drought tolerant.

The annual component of Double-Cross is Whitetail Institute annual brassicas. As an annual component, the brassicas in Double-Cross grow quickly, produce huge amounts of early tonnage that become even sweeter with the first frosts of fall and provide additional critical food for deer during cold months.

Many hunters and managers plant perennial and annual food plots for several reasons. A big one is attraction. All Whitetail Institute food plot products are highly attractive to deer, but even the best plantings can attract deer even better when they're offered as an alternative with other forages to increase variety. Double-Cross lets you take advantage of that within the same food plot, and the Whitetail Institute has made it easy by ensuring the perennial and annual components of Double-Cross are already mixed in the precise ratios testing has shown to be optimum for attraction and forage growth.


All the forage components in Double-Cross establish quickly, and they're attractive to deer immediately. The brassicas in Double-Cross

become sweeter with the first frost of fall, as do standard brassicas, but they are far more attractive than standard brassicas, often even in the early season before frosts arrive. Because they have been carefully selected to complement the already excellent early-season performance of Imperial Whitetail Clover, they boost early tonnage of the stand even more. And because they become even sweeter after frosts arrive, they can add even more late-season attraction to the plot. The Imperial Whitetail Clover and WINA brassicas in Double-Cross work together toward a common purpose: maximizing tonnage and attraction in the early and late seasons.

Then in the spring after planting, the Imperial Whitetail Clover component in Double-Cross is one of the first things to green up, providing deer with a highly nutritious food source at a critical time, when they're trying to recover winter health losses. As spring progresses and soil temperatures increase, the Imperial Whitetail Clover component flourishes and produces tons of highly digestible high-protein forage, which is crucial for antler development, body weight, fawn development and milk production.

After the first fall and winter after planting Double-Cross, the stand is essentially all Imperial Whitetail Clover, which can last up to five years from one planting. If you want to re-establish the annual brassicas in the stand the next fall, that's also easy. Just top-dress the stand with one 3-pound bag of Imperial Whitetail Winter-Greens per acre.

If you have been looking for a perennial blend with the proven performance of Imperial Whitetail Clover, plus the increased early and late season tonnage of brassicas, Double-Cross is the answer. It will attract and hold deer on your property, provide nutrition bucks need to grow bigger antlers and improve the overall quality of deer.

Double-Cross should be planted in loamy, light clays to heavy soils. It's available in two sizes: a 4-pound bag that will plant a half-acre, and an 18-pound bag that will plant 2-1/4 acres. Additional information is available at [whitetailinstitute.com](http://whitetailinstitute.com) or by calling the Whitetail Institute's consultants at (800) 688-3030. 

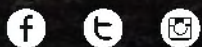


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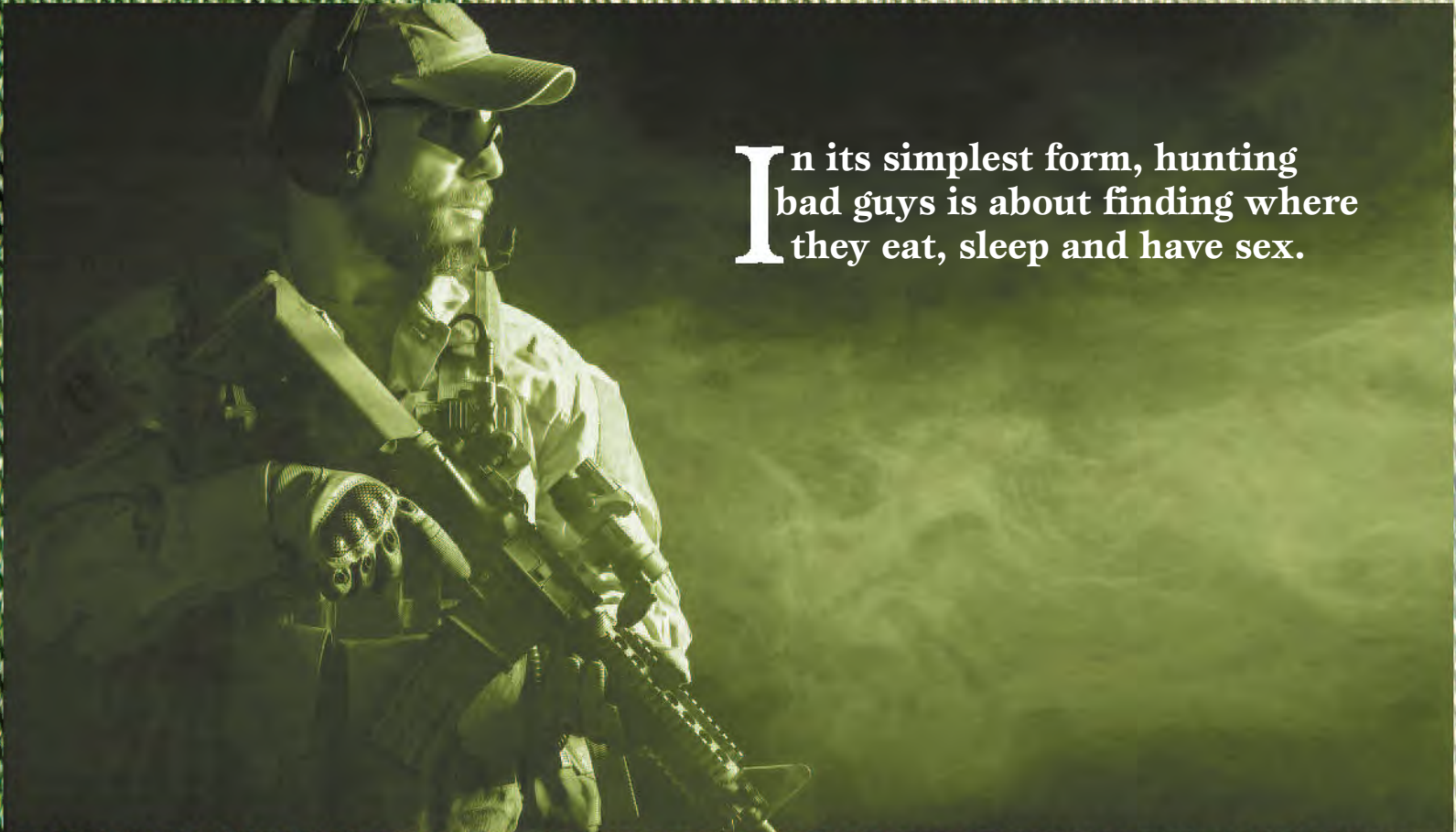
# What Special Forces Can Teach Us About Hunting Deer

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## Part II

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By Craig Dougherty



**I**n its simplest form, hunting bad guys is about finding where they eat, sleep and have sex.





However, Bill, a Chief Warrant Officer 3 in a special missions unit, and his troops never stop there. They gather all kinds of bad-guy information and bring it together in a document called a concept of operations, or CONOP. I don't want to get too deep into military jargon, but a CONOP is basically a plan. It identifies the mission, challenges, strategies and solutions of a situation. Basically, it's what the guy in charge wants to accomplish and how he intends to do it. The more relevant information incorporated into the CONOP, the better.

Deer hunters might simply call it a plan. That doesn't mean a plan to simply grab your stuff and go hunting, but a detailed analysis of what deer you're pursuing and how you plan to hunt him. Many good hunters hunt one deer, not just deer in general.

After spending a few hours with Bill, I began to realize how important a thorough CONOP was to his passion for hunting bad guys and deer. Bill is a planner, and his CONOP experience makes him a real pro when preparing for a hunt. He prepares a plan, a fallback plan and a fallback to the fallback. I wouldn't say he is an obsessive-compulsive planner about hunting, but he's pretty close, and when you think about what he hunts (bad guys and deer), it's understandable.

The more we visited, the more I realized Bill and my son, Neil, were on the same page about hunting deer. Neil understands deer and how they interact with the land. He develops detailed hunting plans for our property and the properties of clients. He gathers data and folds it into a detailed plan. In Bill's terms, Neil is developing a CONOP. He intimately understands how and why deer move on our property. He constantly monitors food sources and keeps a watchful eye on changing cover patterns. He knows which stands hunt well in specific winds and which ones to avoid. He knows when and how the neighbors hunt and folds it (and 100 other data points) into a plan. He uses cameras and binoculars to find the buck he wants and then starts patterning him with cameras. By the time he hunts a buck, he knows him like one of his children. And he knows how to hunt him. He is definitely a CONOP kind of guy and has the heads on the wall to prove it.

I hit the woods when I feel like it. My stand choices might be based on the beauty of the autumn light coming through the leaves or the view. Or maybe I pick a stand because it's easy to get into or close to the truck. Typically, when Neil asks why I chose a stand, I have some lame reason and wind up blurting out, "Because I felt like it." No plan, no reason — just an idea of sorts. I'm definitely not a CONOP guy, and I don't have the heads on the wall to prove it. I do get lucky once in a while and kill one.

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### What Kind of Hunter Are You?

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Digitals don't lie. If you think there's no place in hunting for digital technology, you'd better think again



or at least talk to Bill. He uses digital stuff every day in operations. Digital technology lets him zoom in from 30,000 feet to three inches. He takes pictures, intercepts messages and listens into conversations. He's a big fan of cameras, and photos are an intricate part of anything he does tracking down terrorists. He takes pictures from three feet to 30,000 feet. He needs a good look at the enemy and must decide if he's the bad guy he's pursuing. He uses auto-recognition cameras and an ALICE pack full of electronic special-purpose tools designed to keep track of those guys. In his line of work, you must know the difference between a bomb builder and his twin brother. You have to know where the bad guys are, where they've been and where they're going. He uses all kinds of gadgets and specially designed apps to keep track of the enemy — some top secret, some not so much. He's even designed a few gadgets to keep track of deer he's chasing back home.

Neil drooled when he heard about the surveillance stuff Bill was working with. I saw the if-only wheels spinning a million miles per hour in his head. When Bill pulled out a homemade deer-activity-monitoring device, Neil about turned inside out.

"If only I had a few dozen of those," he muttered.

Each year, Neil analyzes about 200,000 deer photos. They tell him where deer are feeding, when they show up and how they get there. He uses cameras to identify rut behavior and tell him when it's time to move on Mr. Big. Cameras are a necessary component of his attack plan. He uses chip and texting (cellphone technology) cameras. Cameras using cellphone technology tell him what's going on in real time, which is often the difference between knowing and wondering. A big part of Neil's hunting technique is keeping track of what's going on

with the deer he's hunting. He wants to know what they are doing at all times. Neil goes almost paranoid when a deer he's after disappears for any time. He has always been a big fan of game cameras and has the properties he manages rigged with remote setups so he can monitor things from hundreds of miles away.

Again, he and Bill are on the same page with surveillance cameras. The only difference is that Bill's can do a lot more, such as peek in a window at 30,000 feet and identify and keep track of who they photographed and where.

Cameras have become a staple of the modern deer hunter. The trick is to use them to help you put your hunting plan together, not just to judge your annual big-buck beauty contest. We rely on them to tell us what's going on in the deer woods. Our cameras tell us what deer are eating, where they're sleeping and when they're breeding. We like cameras that relay pictures in text-like digital-message formats. The less scent and disturbance in the woods, the better.

Neil spends more time messing with photos than hunting deer. And therein lies the problem. He needs a technology to identify and track individual bucks for him. No wonder he and Bill are becoming buddies. If only he could borrow Bill's gear for a season.

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### Shaping the Battlefield, or 'Deerscaping'

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Soldiers are good at gaining the advantage over an enemy. They have been shaping battlefields for centuries. According to Bill, they still are. In fact, it's one of their most-used tactics when hunting bad guys, and they use the term all the time. They do it by using various



*"Deerscaping" is a strategy the author uses to attract and harvest deer. This is similar to shaping the battlefield.*



intelligence tools. Soldiers are not above modifying terrain to set the bad guys up for the kill. They do all kinds of things to shape the battlefield, including placing a blockade on a well-used highway to force bad guys into using back roads (where our guys are ready for them), or deliberately planting a decoy (munition by the side of the road) to distract the enemy. Bad guys make easy targets after they're forced out of their spider holes when their food supply has been taken out. Bad guys on the move are much easier to kill than bad guys in hiding. And the ultimate battlefield shaper is the drone.

No, we don't use drones (it's probably illegal) to hunt deer, but at NorthCountry Whitetails, we've been shaping deer hunting battlefields for more than 25 years. We call it "deerscaping." Every property we work with is deerscaped in some form.

It's part science and part art, but shaping the battlefield is a big part of the deer hunting battle. You have to pay attention to how you access the area, where you locate bedding areas and how the wind will affect your food plots. You should decide how you're going to hunt a plot before you create it. Details matter when it comes to creating world-class hunting properties. It's not enough to have good deer. You must have deer you can kill. If you leave it to chance, the bigger bucks usually win.

Building a few large feeding plots in the center of your property helps anchor populations of deer on your land, and hunting plots tucked here and there help you kill the buck you've watched all summer. How about some Imperial Whitetail Clover in a cool, moist pocket for some early-season hunting, or some Winter-Greens or Tall Tine Tubers planted on a warm southern slope to provide you with your best ever late-season hunting?

We especially like tailoring air movement to play into our hunting strategy. We take out turbulence-creating trees when they create wind eddies and plant a double row of spruce or pines to move air in a specific direction. Setting a stand so your scent drifts over a valley, lake or highway can keep the air clean downwind of your stand. No, we don't make four-lane highways, but we do plenty of hinge-cutting and brush crushing.

How about building a fence or dropping a line of trees to force deer to use a specific trail? What about piling brush to move deer to where you want them? How about clearing a brushy draw to move them up the ridge a few hundred yards? What about posting a plywood shadow man in a tree stand to make deer move to the right or stop avoiding that stand every time you hunt it? Or maybe killing does from a load of hay bales that disappear when the shooting's finished? The list of deerscaping tactics is endless.

You get the picture. If military guys can shape the battlefield, so can deer hunters.

### **Sensitive Site Exploitation; Walking 'Em Back**

The intelligence community regularly uses sensitive site exploitation, or SSE. They find

where a terrorist has holed up and go through anything he might have left to analyze where he's been and what he's been up to. They analyze every bit of evidence. They're looking for clues about how he operates, who he knows and how he spends his time.

A bad guy's cellphone is a real find, and his computer is solid gold. But simple stuff such as wrappers and food can be important, too. Pictures he kept and people he knows help good guys hunting terrorists get the jump on bad guys the next time around.

The trouble with deer hunters is they quit hunting the last day of the season. Some post-season work would set them up for a successful subsequent year. We hit the ground as soon as the season ends to determine how deer beat us (I lose more than I win).

Neil calls this walking 'em back. You hope for snow or at least some mud so you can get on a good track and take it backward. This lets you learn how a buck avoided your stands and kept clear of human traffic areas. You will see where he fed and where he went to bed.

We'd been doing sensitive site exploitation long before we encountered the term in a military context. We just called it post-season scouting. It's a critical data point of every plan Neil develops.

We also open the rumen of every deer we hang in the skinning shed. We paw through it with rubber gloves or a knife blade to see where deer have been and what they're eating. A rutting buck on the move has much different rumen contents than one hanging out in an acorn flat.

It's sure beginning to seem like one of the few differences between hunting bad guys and hunting deer is that bad guys can shoot back.



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# The Perfect Nurse Crop for Fall Perennial Plantings

*Whitetail Oats Plus Offer Benefits Galore*

By **William Cousins**

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer



**I**f you're planning to plant a perennial food plot this fall, also consider planting Whitetail Oats Plus with the perennial as a nurse crop. Doing so can yield many benefits.



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## What is a Nurse Crop?

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A nurse crop is basically a fast-growing secondary crop that's planted with a primary crop (in this case, Imperial Whitetail Clover, Alfa-Rack Plus, Double-Cross or Fusion) in the same seedbed. Nothing beats Whitetail Oats Plus when it comes to nurse crops to plant with these perennials in the fall.

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## Fastest Possible Attraction

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Several characteristics of Whitetail Oats Plus make it an ideal choice for a nurse crop with a perennial planted in fall. First, all Whitetail Institute food plot seed components are evaluated for rapid emergence and seedling vigor. That's why all Whitetail Institute food plot products can appear above ground so soon after planting. Whitetail Oats Plus can do so even more quickly and, when planted as a nurse crop, will help the food plot green up more quickly and start attracting deer as soon after planting as possible.

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## Additional Drought Protection

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A nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus also works in combination with Rainbond, which is included in the seed coating on the legumes in the Whitetail Institute perennials mentioned. Rainbond protects the seed from germinating on comparatively small amounts of moisture (in some cases, even just with heavy dew) when there's insufficient moisture in the soil to sustain the seedling. Rainbond also continues to benefit seedlings after germination by helping maintain a more consistent supply of moisture.

Rainbond acts as a mini-reservoir of water by absorbing up to 200 times its weight in water from the soil and drawing in more moisture from the soil as the seedling uses it. And because Rainbond is in the applied seed coating, it remains where the seedling is growing so the seedling has ready access to the moisture.

Planting a nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus with these 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, which can slow the growth of the perennial.

The plants in Whitetail Oats Plus also have fibrous roots, which help hold the soil in place while the perennials establish. Whitetail Oats Plus also creates a microenvironment of higher humidity near the soil surface that helps reduce evaporation of moisture from the soil. This microenvironment, coupled with the water-holding benefits of the Whitetail Institute's Rainbond seed coating, can provide even greater protection for the perennial seedlings as they sprout and grow.

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## Sustained Attraction

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Whitetail Oats Plus doesn't just provide benefits during the first month or two after planting them with a perennial in fall. They continue to boost attraction by adding variety to the stand. (You can find out more about Whitetail Oats Plus and its components in the article on page 18 of this issue.)

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## How to Prepare the Seedbed and Plant A Fall Perennial with A Nurse Crop of Whitetail Oats Plus

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Preparing the seedbed and planting a perennial with a nurse crop

of Whitetail Oats Plus is easy. With a couple of simple exceptions, just follow the planting dates for the perennial you'll be planting. You'll just need to adjust the seeding preparation and planting instructions a little, as follows:

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## Seedbed Preparation

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As with any forage planting, it's best to have your soil tested by a qualified soil-testing laboratory such as Whitetail Institute to determine exact lime and fertilizer requirements. If possible, have your soil tested several months before planting so you can add any lime recommended and disk or till it into the seedbed well before planting. When you submit your soil sample to the lab, have the lab test for establishment of the perennial you'll be planting, not for the nurse crop. If no soil test is performed, add a minimum of two tons of lime per acre to the seedbed. Do not skip this step. Making sure soil pH is neutral (6.5 or higher) is the most important factor you can control to ensure food plot success.

Remove as much of the grass and weeds from the seedbed as possible by disking, tilling and/or spraying.

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## Planting

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**Step 1. When you reach your planting date, start by disking or tilling the soil.** Then, before smoothing the disked or tilled seedbed, put out the fertilizer (as called for in your soil-test report, or 400 pounds of 17-17-17 or equivalent fertilizer per acre if you didn't do a soil test), and broadcast the Whitetail Oats Plus seed at a seed rate of 30 to 45 pounds per acre.

**Step 2. After you have put out the fertilizer and Whitetail Oats Plus seed, drag the seedbed to lightly cover the Whitetail Oats Plus seed.** This will also smooth the surface of the seedbed sufficiently to prepare it for planting the perennial seed. A cultipacker is not required, but if you have one, it's OK to cultipack instead of dragging to complete this step.

**Step 3. When the seedbed has been smoothed, broadcast the perennial seed at its full seeding rate** (shown on the front of the bag).

**Step 4. Do not cover the perennial seed.** If you used a drag at the end of Step 2, do nothing more after you put out the perennial seed. However, if you used a cultipacker at the end of Step 2, cultipack the seedbed again after putting out the perennial seed to help it establish good contact with the soil.

With Mother Nature's cooperation, your nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus will emerge quickly, and you'll see the perennials emerging soon after. As a final note, the planting instructions for Whitetail Oats Plus, when planted by itself, call for an additional fertilization with 100 pounds of 34-0-0 or equivalent high-nitrogen fertilizer per acre about 30 to 45 days after germination. This additional fertilization isn't necessary when Whitetail Oats Plus is planted as a nurse crop because the perennial legumes will produce enough nitrogen to maximize the growth of the legumes and the nurse crop of Whitetail Oats Plus.

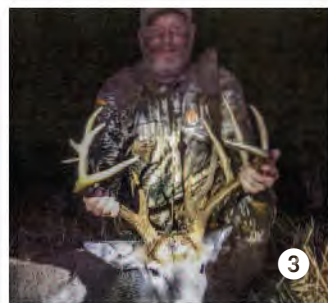
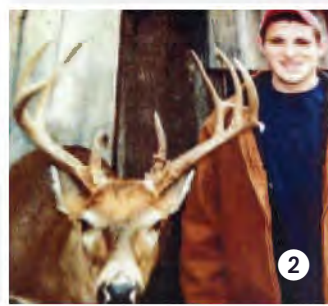
For more information, visit [whitetailinstitute.com](http://whitetailinstitute.com), or call (800) 688-3030 to speak with one of our knowledgeable in-house consultants. The consultants are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CDT, Monday through Friday. The call and service are free. 



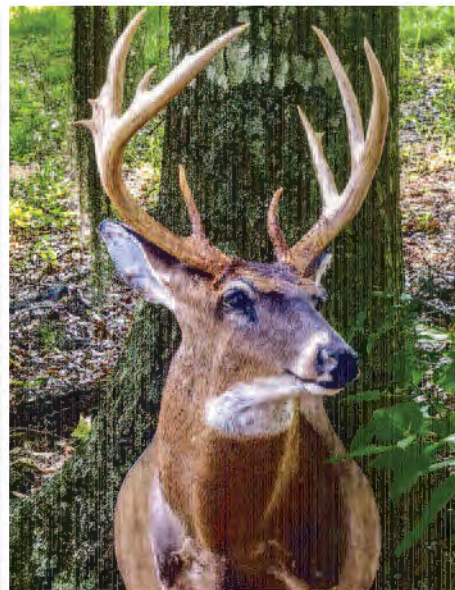
# Whitetail Institute **RECORD BOOK BUCKS...**

## **Dennis Vance – Illinois**

A group of guys and I have leased this acreage for more than 15 years in Illinois. From the start of our club we have used Imperial Whitetail Clover, Alfa-Rack Plus, Extreme, Edge and other Whitetail Institute products almost exclusively. When we first started hunting there, it was almost all small bucks, but now we have a good number of what we call shooters. My son, in the last three years, has taken three super bucks. Two of them are Pope & Young (Photo 1 and 2) and the third a little smaller. Other guys have also taken good bucks. One was 169-7/8 inches (Photo 3) and another one of our members harvested a 13-pointer out of one of our food plots sown with No-Plow and Winter Peas Plus that scored 160 inches (Photo 4).



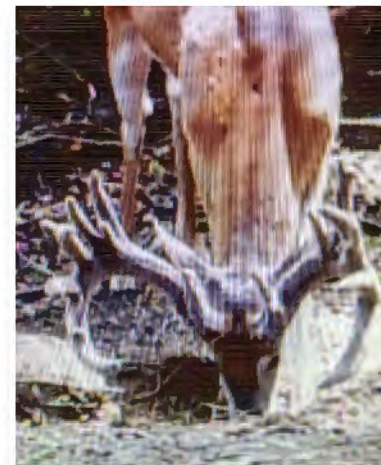
## **Matthew Hand – Alabama**



This was the first year we planted No-Plow on our new property. There were three other bucks in the field when I harvested this one with my bow. He was killed on Nov. 20 and scored 132-3/8. He is an awesome Alabama whitetail. We also killed another 120-inch buck in another No-Plow plot in October. We have used No-Plow for the past 12 years on a different property and we will continue to do this as long as we keep seeing bucks like we have in the past. We've killed 25 bucks off No-Plow since we started using it.

## **Laken Benson – Kentucky**

I want to thank Whitetail Institute for producing such great products! I have a 1500-acre lease here in western Kentucky and the only products I use are Whitetail Institute's. Right after turkey season, I put out 30-06 mineral and use it until the velvet drops. I put out 15 mineral lick spots this spring and the deer are wearing it out! This is my third year on the farm with two of my buddies and we can tell a dramatic difference from when we started. I put down 4-1/2 acres of Fusion this spring as well and it looks beautiful. Last fall we planted Whitetail Oats Plus on eight acres after they harvested our corn. I'm a huge supporter of Whitetail Institute products and



I recommend them to all my hunting buddies around here. My buddy, Kasey, who is on the lease with me harvested a buck that grossed 207 inches on our farm. I really believe the 30-06 played a huge role in the growth of this deer. I had pictures of the buck from late July all the way until he killed him Nov. 11. See the enclosed photos of him at a 30-06 lick and on Nov. 11 after Kasey killed him. The buck was the third biggest ever killed in Webster county and the second biggest with a bow. Thanks again, Whitetail Institute, for the great products!!



## Danny Wahl - Missouri

My deer hunting began late in life at age 27 — 30 years ago. I hunted my grandpa's farm where on the average I saw three to four deer per week. They were mostly does and a few small bucks. In 1988 and 1991 I did manage to get lucky enough to take two Pope & Young bucks, one was a 131-4/8-inch 8-pointer and the



other was a 22-inch wide 8-pointer with a seven inch drop-tine. I think I got them because no one hunted there before me and that allowed the deer to mature. After those two deer, I never saw another big buck throughout the next eight years of bowhunting.

18 years ago my son, Colt (age two at the time), was with me while I cleared my first food plot. It was a three-acre bottom that I planted with Imperial Whitetail Clover. Within the first year I noticed a considerable increase in the number of deer I was seeing. It went from three or four per week up to three or four per hunt. Yes, there were nights I didn't see any, but not nearly as many as the 12 years prior to planting my plot.

My plot wasn't pretty. It had many weeds and yet it still drew deer in like moths to a flame. After fighting the weed problem for three or four years, I finally gave in and did a soil test and added lime and fertilizer as recommended by the Whitetail Institute. My plots went from weedy to a lush green carpet that looked so good I was tempted to put salad dressing on it and eat it myself.

During the first few years my friend Rick and I added a few more types of plantings, including Alfa-Rack, No-Plow, Secret Spot, Winter-Greens, Pure Attraction and Tall Tine Tubers.

The variety gave the deer something extra and, again, deer sightings went up and we were seeing more bucks. Some of those bucks were really nice. We went from seeing 7-pointers on average to 10-pointers, however it took us a while to actually put a big one down because we hunted using a first-come-first-serve hunting technique. Which meant, sure, we can hold out for a big one, as long as he gets there first! We did take a couple bucks scoring in the 120s.

11 years ago, my cousin's husband, Jeff, shot a super-nice 13-point non-typical with his muzzleloader as it was leaving our food plot. His deer scored 164-1/8 inches. The next year, I decided that instead of shooting four or five deer a year, I was going to take my does and then trophy hunt. That year I took a super-nice buck which was a mainframe 10-pointer with six non-typical points making him a 16-point non-typical scoring 164-4/8 inches net Pope & Young points. That deer was taken within 20 yards from where Jeff took his last year and we believe the two bucks were twins at birth since they shared so many of the same traits. No doubt, these two monsters were the results of our food plotting efforts.

Colt and I have taken many nice bucks since, including a 166-inch 11-point, a 179-inch 9-point, a 179-inch 10-point and several others. Enclosed are three photos of some of the bucks we've killed. Thank you, Whitetail Institute, for helping with our ongoing success! Thanks for everything.



## Paul Hausz - Wisconsin


It all started nearly 20 years ago when my father harvested a gross score 198-5/8-inch five-by-five on our farm. It netted 178-3/8 inches typical, holding the county record for 15 years. I was perplexed by how this deer got so big. After tons of research, I was able to nail it down to three key factors; age, nutrition and genetics. Looking at the nutritional part of their diets is when I found the Whitetail Institute. I ordered my first bag of Imperial Whitetail Clover 16 years ago and it was sown into the moist soils of our farm. I was amazed at how the deer



were so attracted to the clover, and how the bucks seemed to be so attracted to this field during daylight hours. A few years went by and the results were amazing. I noticed larger body mass and a major difference in antler growth. Well, 16 years later and with numerous Whitetail Institute products always present on my farm, I have harvested over 17 P&Y bucks including my first gross Booner this year. The trail cam photo shows a buck we call Curley. He was born, bred and raised on Imperial Whitetail Clover. He was about 150 inches last year and around 180 inches this year. He was in that same small Imperial Whitetail Clover field all the time.

I have tested other food plot products beside the Whitetail institute products, and the deer would walk right through them to get to the Whitetail Institute products. I literally would have to mow the other clover plots to keep them from flowering, but the deer kept Imperial Whitetail Clover down at six inches at all times. Whitetail Institute is truly the leader in the food plot industry because they truly care about us as conservationists, the health of the deer herd, putting all the research and development into their



products, and focusing on the next generation of hunters coming in to this great sport every day. When I take my young children out, I always hunt my Whitetail Institute food plots because I know we will see deer. I can't thank Whitetail Institute enough for making my quest become a reality. The 200-inch mark is just around the corner and with Whitetail Institute products it will be a reality. Thanks again, Whitetail Institute, for all you do. God Bless! 

**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](mailto:info@whitetailinstitute.com) or send them to: **Whitetail News, Attn: Record Book Bucks, 239 Whitetail Trail, Pintola, AL 36043**



# REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

(Continued from page 31)

about Whitetail Institute products...



I have been using Whitetail Institute products for a long time. And, if you look at the beautiful 10-pointer and the monster 14-pointer of which I have enclosed pictures, you will know why. The Imperial Whitetail Clover has held the does and bucks. The deer love the Imperial Whitetail Clover. The following is a story about a young deer I named Dumb-Dumb because I thought he was really stupid. I saw him all hunting season on my 60 acres.

I have two large food plots in different fields and Dumb-Dumb was on one or the other. I usually sit at my ground blind behind the house. Dumb-Dumb came so close to me so many times that I could have reached out the window and touched him. That was three years ago. He had a bunch of small horns coming out of his head which was very unusual.

The following hunting season, Dumb-Dumb had grown his bunch of horns much longer so I named him Freaky. Again, I saw him on both plots and he came very very close to my blind. I saw him all hunting season and actually considered shooting him to keep him from doing any breeding. I thought he was a cull-buck that needed to get out of breeding stock, but decided to let him go.

I never saw him last year.

This past season, I started hearing about a buck with an unusual rack but I had never seen him. Others on the adjoining farm had pictures of him and named him T-Rex.

On Nov. 6, black powder season, three does came by my blind. About ten minutes went by and, all of a sudden, it happened! There came T-Rex running straight at me about 60 yards. I had about three seconds to get the black powder gun out the window. All I could see was horns. He moved to his left running wide open giving me a broadside shot. He fell in my food plot. My son came down and said that it was T-Rex. That was the first time I had ever seen him. I was too excited to talk. I have many big bucks mounted but none like T-Rex. Unofficially he scored 215 B&C.

*Jim Halley -  
Virginia*



Food plots are a long road, and at times difficult, but it's also a road you can't get off. My first food plot was about 15 feet wide and about 50 feet long, made with a chain saw and tiller. It was my first try and I used Whitetail Institute's Imperial Whitetail Clover. I planted it and pretty much forgot about it for a month or so. When I rode back to check on how it was doing, I found the prettiest stretch of clover I had ever seen. That little experience left me with the desire to continue my clearing and planting of Imperial Whitetail Clover and No-Plow on the logging roads that went through our property. That was about 15 years ago.

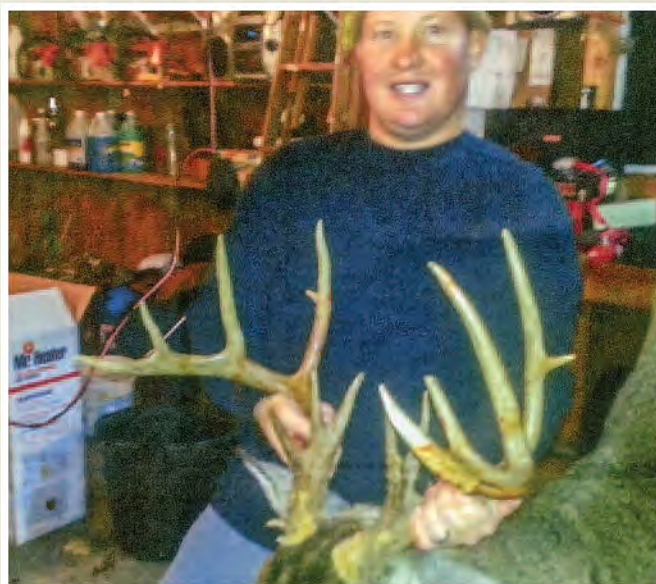
I use Secret Spot in small clearings, and the new Ambush is used in secluded areas. PowerPlant is one of my favorites too. The deer love it.

Over time, I have seen an increase in the number and size of the deer but most of all in the antler size. I have cleared approximately five acres and have been planting nothing but Whitetail Institute products. If you follow the planting instructions, and with a little help from Mother Nature, you should have great results.

The enclosed picture shows my youngest son with an 18-point buck, gross 163 inches, that was harvested between the Ambush plot and the main Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot.

I can't wait to get the next issue of *Whitetail News*.

*Jim Montgomery - Illinois* 



## Send Us Your Photos!

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

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# THE IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF FOOD PLOTS

By Mark Kenyon

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

**T**wo hours and change. That's how long I hunted two years ago before my new food plot began paying off.

It was only a few weeks earlier that I'd sprayed, disked and broadcast several bags of Pure Attraction into the previously barren soil, and I was already seeing dividends. At first, the pay-off looked like a flicker of movement, but then it was a silhouette. Finally, I realized it was a mature buck.

Many prospective food plotters worry that it might take years to see the benefits of their work come to fruition, but on that cool October evening hunt, I could see that wasn't true.

There's no doubt that food plots offer tremendous long-term benefits to deer and deer hunting prospects, but you don't need to wait years to see positive changes on your property. From what I've seen, the benefits of food plots come in many forms at many times — and not necessarily after a long wait.

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## Year 1

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As evidenced by the encounter I described, the benefits of food plots can manifest themselves the first year you use them or even the first day of the season. But the ways those benefits come to be are many.

Most notably, the first year you've established a food plot, you should expect to see increased deer activity on your property.



Whitetails aren't too different than teenage boys, as they're always searching for their next meal. If you can provide the best food in the neighborhood, you'll likely reap the rewards. More deer on your property, in most cases, will result in increased hunting opportunities.

In addition to attracting more deer to your land, food plots can help you target those deer more effectively. With a well-placed food plot and smart hunting, even in the first year, you'll likely see some deer develop a consistent pattern between a bedding area and your plot — especially in the early or late seasons.

According to an Ohio wildlife habitat specialist I know, the key to seeing those immediate benefits depends just as much on how you treat the surrounding area as the food plot itself.

"If you can provide a stress-free environment around the food plot, whether it's the first or second year, it's going to be attractive," he said. "And then you can really start to dictate things."

On the other hand, if you're sloppy with your access or entry, hunt the area too much or generally just stress the deer, you're not likely to see these benefits, as most deer, especially mature bucks using your plots will be much more likely to do so during darkness.

Given the immediate ability of food plots to attract deer, they can also provide benefits in the form of increased viewing/hunting opportunities for young or new hunters. You can place a ground or elevated box blind at these locations that will make for a terrific and comfortable hunt while also giving new hunters the chance to see plenty of wildlife. That kind of experience can't be easily replicated with consistency while deep in the timber hanging from a tree. I have enjoyed this benefit, as a box blind on my aforementioned food plot allowed my sight-impaired father to harvest his first buck in decades.

## Year 2

If you played your cards right in Year 1 with food plots, you'll likely have enjoyed plenty of success in the way of increased deer activity and hunting opportunities. During Year 2, you should continue to enjoy those benefits. In many cases, those types of results should actually improve, as deer become more accustomed to a new food source and develop more consistent patterns. Additionally, as deer learn to use your food plot, you can also learn how they're doing it and then better adjust your hunting strategy to take advantage.

In the second year, you'll also begin to see another return. With increased hunting opportunities at a plot and by attracting more bucks to your property, you'll have more opportunities to make management decisions. This is one of the greatest benefits of food plots.

You're going to be able to attract deer to your food source, and once you do that, now you can make the decision if you want to harvest this deer or if you want to wait another year.

Those increased harvest decisions, enabled in part by the opportunities afforded by your food plots, can really help you make a difference in your area. If you have more deer and bucks at your plot and around it, you'll get to be disproportionately responsible for whether bucks make it to older age classes. If you're targeting mature bucks, this can make a huge difference.

In addition to hunting and management benefits, if you've implemented a substantial year-round food plot plan with perennials providing high levels of protein in spring and summer, you'll likely begin to see the nutritional benefits for your deer herd. You should also see



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some of the bucks you passed the year before, and with added age and nutrition you'll likely see better antler and body size. You'll also likely see benefits such as healthier fawns and better winter recovery in the herd.

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### Longer Term

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Moving forward, every successive year in your food plot plan should bring more noticeable benefits. Hunting and viewing opportunities will continue to be strong, as more deer are attracted to your property and more deer make your land their home. As a result, your opportunities to make management decisions will continue to increase every year, too.

Nutritional benefits, though, will most likely provide the greatest improvements during the longer term. With a year-round food plot system filling the gaps during lulls in natural food availability, fawn recruitment, body size, antler growth and many other metrics for deer health will likely continue to improve to some degree.

In fact, according to a report from Texas A&M University, "Researchers in Mississippi found that maintaining 0.5 percent of an area in year-round agronomic food plots increased body mass, number of antler points, beam circumferences and beam lengths of whitetail deer." A study in Louisiana showed that yearling deer "exhibited a 19 percent increase in live weights following establishment of cool-season food plots."

Those types of results will, of course, vary depending on the food sources available outside your plots. But whether you're in an area of heavy agriculture production or the big woods of the Northeast, pro-

viding additional high-nutrition options for the herd will help.

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### Conclusion

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Two years and change. That's how long it's been since that initial encounter described at the beginning of this piece. Just last night, the benefits of that plot came to a head.

It was 45 minutes before dark, and I was again perched high above the food plot, now an established, consistent all-you-can-eat buffet for local deer. As light faded, numerous deer emerged and headed into the plot, plump, content and comfortable — a pattern that has become nearly like clockwork. And then, a shining white set of antlers atop a stout 3-year-old Michigan buck emerged from the nearby standing corn and headed toward me on a mission. He'd obviously been there before — possibly many times during his three years.

First, he nibbled on some Whitetail Oats Plus. Then he meandered into a strip of Winter-Greens and finally returned to the oats. And there in the lush carpet of green, my arrow met its mark and completed a cycle that was years in the making.

During the three seasons that plot has been in the ground, I've seen multiple mature bucks, fed and nourished dozens of deer, watched and harvested numerous does, shared a successful hunt with my dad for the first time in years, and finally, three years later, filled my tag on a big-racked buck.

Whether it's Year 1, 3 or 10, the answer to the food plot question seems obvious. The benefits are immediate, long-term and everything in between. So what are you waiting for?

It's time to get planting. 🌱

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# DON'T CLEAR THE TABLE

A photograph of two deer in a lush green field. On the left, a doe is grazing. On the right, a buck with large antlers is also grazing. The background is filled with dense green foliage.

*When the chow is gone, deer leave.  
Keep them fat, happy and on your property with  
a year-round food plot program.*

By **Gerald Almy**

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

**The second helping of turkey, gravy and mashed potatoes sits heavy on your paunch at the family holiday gathering. But who can resist pecan pie? Or better yet, how about one slice of pecan and one slice of pumpkin, with a big dollop of whipped cream or ice cream on top?**

The lively conversation begins to lag. The table is cleared. And soon, the dining room is empty as the last guests push their chairs back and head to the living room, sun room or deck.

When the food is gone, the reason for being there is gone.

Unfortunately, that scenario plays out on many whitetail properties. Landowners offer deer great food, most often from fall through winter. But then, they clean the table when the fall-planted annuals die and leftover table scraps are plowed under. Like dinner guests leaving the dining room, when the food is gone on a property, deer

often leave, too.

If the pies and a few clean forks were left on that dining room table — or maybe some nuts, cheese or cookies — those dinner guests might have stayed. And if you plant enough varied forage, so there's never an empty table but always food available, deer will also stay.

Whitetails, like all wildlife, need three things to survive and call a location home: food, water and cover (shelter). Hopefully, you have water sources or have added them. Most landowners also know the value of shelter and have natural cover or create it through habitat work such as hinge-cutting, planting shrubs, clear-cutting and sowing native warm-season grasses.

When cover and water needs are met, food becomes the critical third ingredient to keep deer content and to encourage them to want to stay on your property. Providing a high-quality food source that's available 365 days per year is the final step to keep mature bucks on your land year-round.

Having enough food and sufficient variety year-round accomplishes three crucial goals. Most obviously, it helps you have deer to hunt. Also, it helps you manage them so bucks can reach older age classes. In addition, it allows you the opportunity to provide the highest-quality nutrition possible so they will reach their potential for body size and antler growth.



This third nutritional advantage is important not just for bucks but also does and fawns. After all, the does' milk is nourishing the next generation of bucks. And making your land more appealing to females also attracts more bucks during the rut.

To keep deer on your property year-round, it's vital to always have high-quality food available, whether it's a sun-scorched day in July or an icy morning in February. That's where many food plotters fall short. Too many go in big for one type of food plot but ignore the rest. Some estimates I've seen suggest that 75 to 80 percent of food plotters only plant in fall, mainly to attract deer for hunting.

That's understandable. This was, after all, the original goal of food plots for most people — to attract deer to hunt and lure them into the open.

But food plot options and products have expanded dramatically, and land managers who only offer food from fall through winter will not have nearly the number or quality of deer on their property that a year-round manager does. The reason is clear: If you aren't providing that year-round buffet, someone nearby probably is.

Mature buck home ranges are the subject of many studies and conflicting findings. But the bottom line is that animals expand their ranges as much as necessary to meet their needs. The better the three needs of deer (food, cover and water) are met in a given area, the smaller that buck's home range will likely be, or at least the core part of it, where he spends 90 percent of his time.

That's the guiding principle I've used on my 117 acres in Virginia. And with water and cover needs met through years of habitat work, I've focused more on meeting the animals' year-round food requirements. I've done that by enhancing natural foods and, most important, planting a variety of perennials and spring and fall annuals.

If you've only looked at food plots as a late summer-fall project aimed at improving your hunting, expanding it to offer a year-round buffet program is not difficult. If you already do so, tweaking it a bit or expanding your offerings with new plant varieties will offer even more nutrition and encourage deer to stay on your land, at least most of the time.

Maybe you're skeptical that you don't have enough free time for spring and fall plantings. This isn't as difficult or time-consuming as it might seem, because the appropriate planting dates are staggered, and just a few extra weekends in spring should let you establish a year-round food plot program. As a bonus, this also turns food plotting into a full-time hobby with engaging projects for spring, summer and winter instead of just fall.

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## Color-Code a Calendar

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To make sure I get each seed mix in the ground at the optimum time, I purchase a separate calendar for food plot planning. I then color-code the appropriate dates for each type of Whitetail Institute product I might plant that year. This information is included on the product bag and in charts included in *Whitetail News*. The calendar gives me a clear picture of how much time I have to get that type of seed in the ground. But it also makes it clear that it has to be done during that period.

For example, for planting PowerPlant where I live in Virginia, the dates are May 1 to June 30. I code those months on the calendar with a yellow or orange marker across the bottom of the dates. That's when I have to get PowerPlant in the ground.

Then, I highlight the dates for Tall Tine Tubers and Winter-Greens

with another color during their appropriate planting times — July 15 through Sept. 15 where I live. And so on for the other products I plant. (Tip: I also mark the exact date on the calendar when I put the seeds in so I can move the planting forward or back a bit the next year if it seems appropriate.)

This color-coding system will let you take a day off work or keep a weekend free during the appropriate planting time for planting that seed. Of course, you'll need to schedule time for other chores, too, such as soil testing, fertilizing, liming, tilling and herbicide application. But those chores have to be performed even if you just plant fall annuals, so they shouldn't be used as an excuse for not putting in summer annuals and perennial plots.

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## Two Plant Types Most Food Plotters Need

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Those plant types — perennials and summer annuals — are the ones you need to add if you've focused mainly on fall hunting plots. To me, perennials are the most important. They should be the foundation for any food plot program. Whether you choose Imperial Whitetail Clover or go with Fusion, Extreme, Edge or Alfa-Rack Plus, these plantings will provide food year-round in Southern regions and nine to ten months in Northern locales.

But as good as perennials are, they aren't perfect. That's why you need annuals. They offer deer highly palatable nutrition during the lower-production periods for perennials. Remember, don't clear the table.

Because most land managers already put in fall annuals, the easiest way you can improve food offerings is by adding summer annuals. If you don't put in warm-season annuals in late spring, you're missing a huge opportunity.

The fall annual crops you planted have pretty much petered out by spring. So why not put in another annual that grows super-fast and offers food from May through September where those cereal grains and brassicas were? This lets you make use of those fields for four to five months of high-protein forage production instead of leaving them fallow (that is, cleaning the table) until your fall planting.

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## The Year-Round Program

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Every situation is different, but I like about half of my tillable acreage devoted to perennials. That serves as a base that will support deer with lush nutritious growth in spring, when antler growth is largely determined. These plots will also produce varying degrees of forage during summer and thrive in fall, keeping deer on your land and fattening them up for the rigors of the rut and winter.

With that perennial base, I also dedicate acreage for warm-season annuals planted in spring. This is the step that too many food plotters ignore. A great choice for most of us is a mixture of plants that complement and protect each other, such as PowerPlant. This product includes high-protein offerings such as peas and climbing forage soybeans, as well as other plants that offer food and structural support for the legumes to attach to and climb for enhanced production. These include sunn hemp and sunflowers. Best, every one of these plants thrives, even in hot weather.

From my calendar chart, I see that PowerPlant goes in from May 1 to June 30. This time is free for a food plotter who just plants fall annuals, which typically go in the ground from August to October. Even those who have perennials don't have much to do at that time except

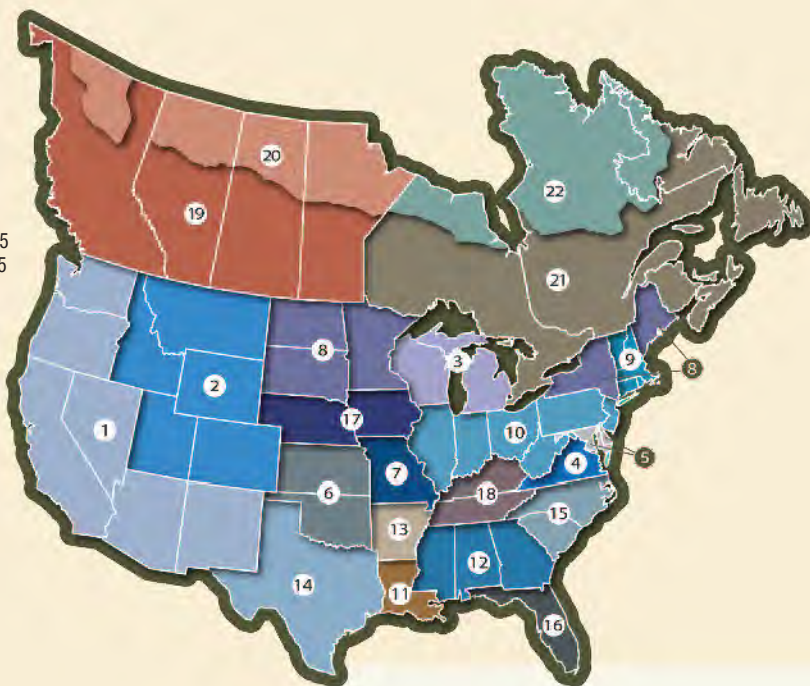


# Food Plot Planting Dates...

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

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

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

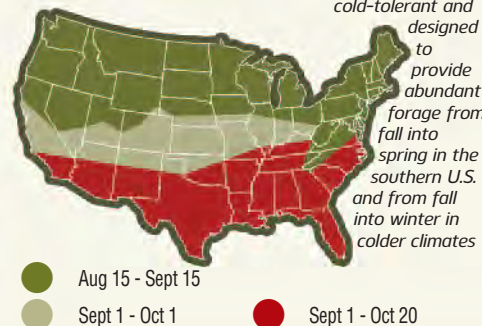


## PLANTING DATES FOR DOUBLE-CROSS, PURE ATTRACTION, SECRET SPOT, WINTER PEAS, BOWSTAND AND AMBUSH

- |  |  |   |                      |
|--|--|---|----------------------|
| 1 Call for planting dates  | 7 North: Aug 1 - Sept 30<br>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<br>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<br>Piedmont: Sept 1 - Oct 5<br>Mountain: Aug 25 - Oct 15 | 20 June 15 - July 15 |
| 4 Coastal: Sept 1 - Oct 15<br>Piedmont: Aug 15 - Oct 1<br>Mountain Valleys:<br>Aug 1 - Sept 15 | 10 Aug 1 - Sept 15                                   | 16 North: Sept 25 - Nov 25<br>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<br>South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 |   |                      |

## PLANTING DATES FOR WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

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

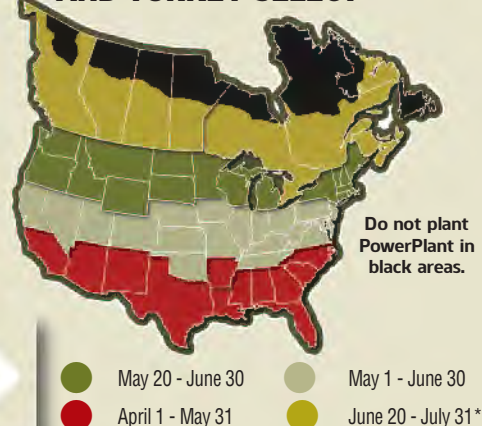


## PLANTING DATES FOR WINTER-GREENS, TALL TINE TUBERS AND BEETS & GREENS

- |  |  |  |                     |
|--|--|--|---------------------|
| 1 Call for planting dates  | 7 North: July 15 - Sept 15<br>South: Aug 1 - Oct 1                               | 14 North: Sept 5 - Oct 30<br>Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15<br>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<br>Piedmont: Aug 15 - Sept 20<br>Mountain Valleys:<br>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<br>Central: Sept 25 - Nov 15<br>South: Oct 5 - Nov 30                 | 19 July 1 - Aug 15  |
| 4 Coastal: Aug 15 - Sept 30<br>Southern Piedmont:<br>Aug 1 - Sept 15<br>Mountain Valleys:<br>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<br>Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15<br>South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 |  | 22 July 1 - Aug 15  |
|  | 13 North: Aug 15 - Oct 1<br>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 IMPERIAL POWERPLANT AND TURKEY SELECT







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perhaps mowing or herbicide spraying to cut back on weeds.

So there's no excuse not to put in a warm-season annual in spring. Even in Northern regions, there's a good six-week window for planting. Surely, everyone can squeeze out one weekend out of six.

With major antler growth still to come from June through early August, the high protein content in PowerPlant can help boost tine length and mass. Not only that, bucks not wanting to move far during hot weather will often bed right in the 5 to 7 foot-tall plants to save time and energy traveling to a distant bedding area.

Take a breather and maybe go fishing. Then, you have another window of opportunity. Check the calendar for where you've color-coded the time to plant brassicas. For various areas, this starting date might range from July through October, with a planting time frame lasting six to ten weeks.

Although cereal grains were once king for fall annual plantings, brassicas have become increasingly popular with many food plotters. And it's no wonder. Their attractiveness, tonnage production and protein levels far surpass most grains, and they're easy to plant and manage.

Winter-Greens or Tall Tine Tubers are excellent brassica choices. I like to put both in the ground in different areas. And don't believe the myth that deer won't eat them until after a frost.

Often, that's the case with poorer quality brassicas or generics. But Winter-Greens and Tall Tine Tubers have been developed to have the highest palatability possible, with tender lettuce-like leaves.

Be sure to plant enough that deer don't destroy the crop. I made that mistake with a quarter-acre plot of Winter-Greens in front of my office. It's an area does and their fawns like to hang out in, and I love watching them between writing sessions. If the sight of fawns bucking and chasing each other and then running back to their mother doesn't bring a smile, I don't know what will.

But by the middle of September, those deer, now bigger and lacking spots, wiped the smile off my face when they almost obliterated the plot, even though it was weeks until the first frost. This year, I doubled the plot to a half-acre, and now it's thriving despite heavy feeding pressure. And again, they're eating it before the first frost.


To take the pressure off these plantings, the next offering I turn to is Whitetail Oats Plus. This planting period does not overlap substantially with that of the brassica products, leaving plenty of time to get both types of fall annuals in the ground before hunting season.

Deer love the oats when they're just a few inches tall, which takes pressure off the brassicas, letting them obtain larger leaf sizes and produce more forage. And the great thing about Whitetail Oats Plus is it can continue to produce highly palatable forage through the dead of winter, when other food sources become scarce.

Chances are that after I get some oats in, I'll plant another plot or two of Imperial Whitetail Clover at that time. That will wrap up my food plot efforts in time for the bow opener in October.

Then in March or April, if the soil isn't too wet and I have a weed-free site prepared, another perennial plot might go in the ground. After that, the planting cycle for annuals will renew in May with PowerPlant.

Of course, each person has time limitations for food plot efforts and times of year when it's harder to get away. But if you can work a few days free during the widely spaced prime planting dates for spring annuals, fall annuals and perennials, you'll have a buffet of food that can be available to deer 365 days per year.

Don't clear the table, and the deer living on your land will have no reason to leave. Now, can I get another piece of pecan pie? 



# Imperial Whitetail **WINTER PEAS PLUS**

*Peas and much more!*



**I**t's no secret that winter peas can be highly attractive to deer. Different winter-pea food plot products, though, vary widely in how attractive to deer they are, and how long they can last in a highly attractive condition. Imperial Whitetail Winter Peas Plus is specifically designed to be as attractive as the Whitetail Institute can make it, and to last from fall into winter.

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## Winter Pea Components

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"A pea is a pea?" Actually, no — not when you're talking about performance as a food plot planting. Some winter pea varieties are simply more attractive to deer than others. Winter Peas Plus contains two winter pea varieties that are exceptionally attractive to deer because they are rich in sugar. Both varieties are also high-protein and cold tolerant. In side-by-side cafeteria tests across North America, these two varieties consistently proved themselves many times more attractive to deer than any other varieties the Whitetail Institute tested.

As highly attractive as these two pea varieties are, though, the Whitetail Institute still wasn't satisfied. You may have noticed that many Whitetail Institute food plot products are blends of different plant varieties. The main reason is that it's rare for one type of forage plant to provide optimum performance in all the categories for which the Whitetail Institute tests. That's why the Institute painstakingly selected other plant varieties to boost attraction and longevity even further, and then combined them in optimum ratios as shown by the testing. This exhaustive research and testing to develop food plot products that perform up to the Whitetail Institute's relentless expectations is one reason Whitetail Institute food plot products continue to dominate the market.

As I mentioned, the pea varieties in Winter Peas Plus are extremely attractive to deer, drawing deer to them as soon as they sprout out of the ground. As such, they can suffer from early overbrowsing when planted alone. The Whitetail Institute added the "Plus" components to act as a nurse crop for the peas to help reduce the likelihood of overbrowsing and add even more early and late-season attraction.

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## The "Plus" Components

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In addition to the pea varieties, Winter Peas Plus contains three other forages components: Whitetail Oats, WINA 210K Kale and WINA 412 Radish. All three are proprietary Whitetail Institute forages, and they can only be found in Whitetail Institute products. They're included to provide several functions, all of which serve to maximize the attraction and longevity of the stand.

Whitetail Oats are included to increase fall attraction even further and to act as a cover crop for the peas. Whitetail Oats establish very quickly and, like the pea varieties in Winter Peas Plus, they're cold tolerant and have proven themselves extremely attractive to deer due

to their high sugar content. WINA 210K Kale and WINA 412 Radish act as nurse crops to help protect the peas from early overbrowsing, and they also provide additional forage for deer later into the cold months of the year.

Each "Plus Component" has been carefully selected, and combined in optimum ratios with the other forages in Winter Peas Plus, to maximize the initial and long-lasting performance of the stand as a deer forage.

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## "Judging A Book by its Cover"

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
How much of Winter Peas Plus is actually winter peas? More than 80 percent.

We've all heard the old saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Generally, that's a caution to avoid evaluating any product by its packaging, and instead, looking deeper — beyond the pretty label — to see what you're really buying. Nowhere is it truer than with fall/winter "pea" products for deer.

Believe it or not, there are some food plot products on the market that say they're "winter pea" products even though they contain less than 10 percent peas. And to make matters even worse, some make up the difference with lower-quality forage components that don't add much to the plot in the way of attraction.

The good news for consumers is that that federal law requires that all food plot seed products carry an ingredient tag on the package. That allows you to check before you buy to make sure the product really is what its name implies.

Finally, there's one more trustworthy factor you can take into account in making your buying decision: Winter Peas Plus bears the Whitetail Institute's name. The Whitetail Institute has been providing folks with industry-leading forage products for over a quarter century and relies on repeat business — putting maximum effort into research, development and testing to make sure that every Whitetail Institute forage product is the very best the Whitetail Institute can make so that customers get the results they expect. That includes using only those forage components that outperform all others tested by the Whitetail Institute in a wide range of categories. That's true of all Whitetail Institute products, including Winter Peas Plus. It's the overriding focus of everything the Whitetail Institute does.

Winter Peas Plus is available in 11-pound bags that plant  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre. If you'd like more information about new Winter Peas Plus, call the Whitetail Institute's in-house consultants at (800) 688-3030. 



# Last-Minute Plot Success

*It's not too late to get a food plot in the ground.*

By David Hart

Photos by the Author

**O**ne minute, you're sitting on the beach without a care in the world. Before you know it, school's back in session and deer season is right around the corner. And you haven't even started on a single food plot. Where does the time go?

"Life often seems to get in the way of the best food plot plans, doesn't it?" asks Whitetail Institute Vice-President Steve Scott.

Hey, it happens to everyone. Don't panic. There's still time to get a few food plots in the ground. You'll have to make some adjustments, of course, and you'll have to work fast. The days are getting shorter and the nights cooler. It's now or never.

Or is it? The last recommended planting dates vary by region, and Scott says you may still have more time than you realize.

"Check our website or on the product's bag itself for the planting dates," he says. "Hunters in the south can plant some products as late as mid-November and still have a good food plot. Of course, the last recommended planting dates are quite a bit earlier in the north, but you may still have more time than you thought."

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## Cutting Corners, Saving Time

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A ticking clock might make some food plotters skip a step or two. Should you cut corners? Depends, says Scott. Some steps must be completed, no matter how much or how little time you have.

"All of our products have general recommendations for lime and fertilizer on the bag and on our website in case you don't get a soil test for whatever reason," says Scott. "However, I never recommend skipping a soil test. Spend the extra money to have your soil test overnighted to our lab. They have a fast turnaround time, usually 24 to 48 hours, so if you can get it to them in a day or two, provide them your email address, you can have your results back in a few days. Using the exact recommendations a soil test provides can mean the difference between a decent food plot and a great food plot."

You may have to skip some site preparation steps. Depending on

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*No matter what you plant, when you plant it or where you plant it, make sure your seed has good contact with the soil.*



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*You can see plenty of deer without a food plot, but you can significantly increase your odds by planting a last-minute food plot.*



how little time you have to spare, killing off existing vegetation with a non-selective herbicide may have to wait until next year. Herbicides will kill plants quickly even though they may not look dead for several days or even weeks. However, spraying the same day or even a few days before planting your seed can certainly harm your plot plants.

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### **Don't Skip**

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Of course, tall grass and weeds will shade out new seedlings, so you'll have to do something to reduce the competition. A close-crop mowing will help. Cut the existing vegetation as close to the ground as possible, then make a few passes with a disk. In fact, if time is limited, consider skipping the mower and going straight to the disk. A few passes with a heavy disk may be good enough to knock down taller weeds and cut them into small pieces. Disking will disrupt them enough to at least slow their growth. Disking will also complete another mandatory step: exposing the soil.

"You absolutely have to have seed-to-soil contact," says Scott.

"Whether you use a disk or a garden tiller or a rake, the seed must come in contact with the soil or it will not grow."

Take the time to complete another mandatory, must-do step, whether you've conducted a soil test or not: Spread lime and fertilizer. Every Whitetail Institute product comes with recommended fertilizer and lime rates. "Follow the recommendations from your soil test or follow the general recommendations printed on each bag to give your seeds the best possible chance to germinate and produce," says Scott.

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### **Annuals Win?**

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But germinating is one thing. Growing large enough to produce ample forage? That's a completely different story. Many perennials, like Imperial Whitetail Clover and Alfa-Rack Plus, for example, are slower to establish than annuals and they likely won't have enough time to produce enough tonnage to attract and hold deer that first fall and winter if you wait until the last minute to plant. They'll sprout, but once cold weather and shorter days arrive, their growth will slow



and eventually they will go dormant in anticipation of spring.

Some annuals will continue to grow. That's why annuals win, hands down. Larger cereal grains like Whitetail Institute Oats Plus will germinate quickly and produce lots of forage and do so quickly. They'll keep growing during all but the coldest weather.

Not all annuals are great last-minute choices, admits Scott. Some, like Tall Tine Tubers, may not have enough time to develop a full leaf system or a large tuber. Deer eat both. However, turnips and other members of the brassica family excel when they have ample time to grow. That typically means they need to go in the ground in late summer or early fall depending on the region you're planting in. Once cold weather settles in, they won't add much to their leaf or root structure. Of course, deer will eat them even if they are only a few inches tall, but the plants will likely be too small to last very long.

Not sure what to use?

"Whitetail Oats Plus is a great choice, but I also like blends as a last-minute food plot option," says Scott. "Whitetail Institute products like No-Plow, BowStand and Secret Spot are all annuals, they contain nu-

merous types of plants that grow fast and are ideal for last-minute food plots."

There's nothing wrong with making your own blend, either. A great last-minute combination is a mix of Imperial Whitetail Clover and Whitetail Oats Plus. The clover may not produce much forage this fall, but the oats will. Even better, the clover "fixes" nitrogen in the soil and the oats, which require nitrogen to grow, will flourish. Since the oats are an annual plant, they will be gone by next spring and the clover will be sending roots deeper into the soil and will be producing tons of high-protein forage.

"Once the annuals are finished for the season, you can spray the clover with herbicides like Arrest Max to control grasses and Slay to control broadleaf weeds when they are actively growing in the spring," suggests Scott.

Whatever you use, just make sure you don't wait any longer. Get something in the ground, even if you have to skip a step or two. Any food plot under your tree stand is better than nothing? 🏹



*Another bruiser taken because of last-minute choices.*



# Food Plot Profiles

*Food plot success often lies in the details. Here are the stories of three folks who did it right.*

By Mark Kenyon

Photos by the Author

**F**lip on a random hunting television channel at some point today for an hour and I can almost guarantee you'll see this scenario play out: A deer hunter climbs into a tree, settles in for a highly anticipated sit and moments later sees a giant buck walking into his pristine green food plot. The hunter gets set, music crescendos and then stops, an arrow or bullet flies, and the happy hunter celebrates. It looks so simple, right?

But anyone who actually plants food plots and uses them as a hunting tool knows this isn't the case. In reality, you face a plethora of details and decisions along the way — never seen on TV or mentioned in stories — that are crucial to reaching that magical moment.

Recently, I dove into several successful food plot stories to peel back the layers on each and see what factors and variables along the way made the difference. Here are three stories about food plots that worked and the nitty-gritty details that led to success.

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## Kale Kitterman

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Kale Kitterman, of southeastern Kansas, has enjoyed the benefits of his favorite food plot for many years and in many ways. He and his father have killed several mature bucks from this plot, but one story — in which no trigger was pulled — stands above the rest. Kale's wife had just taken up hunting that year, and on a special night, the couple sat together in a blind overlooking their plot and watched a wildlife extravaganza. Twenty-five does and 15 bucks worked through during the evening. Bucks sparred and chased does back and forth. It was an experience Kale and his wife would never forget. And it was thanks to a 2.5-acre field and lots of hard work. But what made this plot so special?

The story began years ago, when Kale and his family used an ATV

and an old implement to carve out a circular opening for a plot on their property. An early decision made at that point, regarding the shape and placement of the plot, turned out to be incredibly important. Near the center of the 130-acre parcel was a timbered draw,





roughly in the shape of a backwards C, and to the north and south of that timber were large tracts of grasses and wetlands enrolled in a wetlands reserve program. With hopes of creating a hub for deer activity in the center of the property, they decided to tuck their food plot between the two grassy bedding areas. The finished food plot would be in the shape of an oval, filling the inside of that half-circle timbered draw.

After they had chosen that perfect location, they planted a mix of Imperial Whitetail Clover and Chicory Plus (now Fusion). That and subsequent annual frost-seeding has continued to produce nearly year-round attraction.

To use the plot as a hunting tool, Kale and his family situated three hunting locations along the perimeter to allow use during various wind directions. A ground blind — the one where Kale and his wife's magical hunt occurred — and a tree stand were set up on one end of the opening in the timbered C. Another stand was located along the outer curve of the draw on the opposite end. Mowed trails and roads were maintained to create silent and stealthy access to any of the locations.

With that plot design and the carefully chosen stand sites, Kale and his family could easily access a stand to hunt while never spooking bedded deer in the adjacent bedding areas. That well-thought-out food plot placement led to a season-long hub for deer activity, several deer on the wall and uncountable lifelong memories.

## Aubrey Parker

Aubrey Parker was the mastermind behind a memorable food plot as well — but his beginnings were a bit more modest. He was new to deer hunting just three years ago, and early on, he knew a food plot was in his future. So after buying a 29-acre property in mid-Tennessee and taking a year to get to know the area, Aubrey got to work. It paid off a few months later.

With a parcel containing 29 acres of thick timbered hillside, the best location for Aubrey to try a food plot turned out to be a logging deck at the top of the slope. Thanks to help from a neighbor with a tractor, Aubrey quickly got to work clearing out a one-acre opening shaped like a long, squished rectangle. Imagine a squeezed tube of tooth paste, running north to south.

Being new to the food plot game, Aubrey was careful to do everything right, and details were critical. He recorded every step of the process, with hopes of learning from this first plotting experience and making adjustments in the future — a practice all food-plotters could benefit from as well.

On Aug. 1, Aubrey's neighbor brush-hogged the opening, and two weeks later, Aubrey applied glyphosate with a backpack sprayer, followed by another application a few more weeks down the road. On Sept. 13, Aubrey sent a soil sample to the Whitetail Institute labs, and in three days, he had the results and fertilizer and lime recommendations in his email. It was time to get back to work.

The lime and fertilizer were spread by hand Sept. 19 and then disked into the ground. And on Sept. 20, Aubrey broadcast an acre's worth of Pure Attraction atop the rocky, well-drained soil and lightly dragged the surface. Then, all he needed was good luck and a little rain.

Fortunately, he got that for almost two weeks, resulting in a

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lush, green plot even more beautiful than he could have imagined. Which brings us to Nov. 24.

With deer almost always nearby or feeding in his plot, Aubrey took nearly 45 minutes that morning carefully sneaking into his stand overlooking the field. It was a prickly 30 degrees as he settled in at 5:30 a.m., and within moments, he saw deer in the food plot through his binoculars. His stand was on the northwestern edge of the plot, with a light southerly wind blowing his scent over his left shoulder and away from almost any deer that might feed into range.

Not long after daylight, several does fed into the plot to his south, and a buck soon followed. At the time, it looked to be a nice 8-pointer that Aubrey had been seeing on trail cameras. It was an almost surreal moment — his first food plot and the top buck he was after, stretching forth in front of him. Aubrey cleared his mind, stood, centered the buck in his scope and put the finishing touches on a terrific first food plot experience.

The buck he'd shot was not the one he had seen on camera, but that one detail didn't matter to Aubrey. It was a wildly successful first food plot experience, no matter what was at the end of the blood trail. Despite limited resources and experience, Aubrey's attention to detail and a focus on following the proper steps had led to a successful plot. And finally, his smart placement of the plot in an area of good cover and his careful access led to a dynamite hunt.

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### Rick Stahl

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On the opposite side of the food plotting spectrum from Aubrey is Rick Stahl, a 14-year food plot veteran. And three years ago, one of

Rick's food plots would play a critical role in his hunt for a Pennsylvania buck he'd captured in hundreds of photos that summer.

Using a small ATV and disc, Rick had created a half-acre opening for the plot several years earlier. He planted Imperial Whitetail Clover. It soon came in green and lush and, with a regular schedule of two to three mowings per year, would stay that way for years to come. It became a reliable deer destination.

The plot was roughly rectangular in shape and was located west of a thick timbered bedding area, with a larger crop field to the east on an adjacent property. That placement would prove crucial to success, as the plot's location lent itself to becoming a natural transition area for deer traveling between the bedding area and corn or bean fields on the neighbor's land.



Rick was careful about his activity around the plot, too, never going into those nearby bedding areas unless he was tracking a deer, and instead focusing his hunting efforts primarily on the edges of his plots, such as the clover field. When Pennsylvania's gun season arrived that year, he settled in a ladder stand 25 yards off the edge of the opening. The tree he sat in was at the southeastern corner of the emerald-green clover plot, with the wind drifting from the bedding area back toward him. Almost any deer leaving the cover would pass north and upwind of him while traveling from left to right. It was perfect.

His hopes for the plot and stand location were that the big 10-pointer he'd watched that summer would come out of the timber to his west and cross into the clover ahead of him for a quick snack. And the big boy did just that. Proper plot placement and careful hunting again led to success, this time in the form of a beautiful 4.5-year-old Pennsylvania buck on the ground. 🦌

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*ATVs and small implements provide an alternative for small to medium-sized plots or areas inaccessible to heavy equipment.*

# *How to Plant the Best Food Plots with Minimal Equipment*

By Bob Humphrey

Photos by the Author

**F**or most folks, the term food plot conjures up images of an expansive sea of green filled with unlimited potential. As the sun slowly sinks in the western sky, you watch the first deer filter out; a couple of fawns followed soon by a watchful doe. Soon, more deer appear, at first peeking from safe cover, and then, seeing a few of their kind feeding in the open, venturing out. Next come the young bucks, alternately feeding and harassing nearby does that aren't quite ready to receive their affections. In time, the herd grows, and, nestled comfortably inside your shooting house, you watch, patiently waiting and wondering if the painstaking effort, time and money you put into building the plot will pay off.

Building big plots is an effective way to coax whitetails into the open, but it's not the only way. Very effective alternatives exist for folks who lack the ways or means to build big plots. You might not have the acreage, equipment or time, or conditions might make hot areas inaccessible with larger equipment. Whatever the case, you have several ways to create attractive plots with minimal equipment.

One of the easiest and least expensive is to let someone else do most of the work for you. Chances are you have some timber on your property that you might occasionally have cut for lumber, pulpwood or firewood. It can be a great source of income for other management projects, but the process of cutting or thinning also creates more attractive deer habitat. Cut-over areas will soon grow back with stump sprouts and coarse, woody browse, which makes up much of a deer's fall and winter diet — creating an instant food plot. Later, it becomes dense bedding cover.

Skidding and hauling logs also creates linear stretches of bare ground that provide the ideal starting point for small food plots. Again, the hard work is done for you with someone else's equipment. You need only add a few of the right ingredients and let Mother Nature do the rest.

Those ingredients include fertilizer, quality seed and maybe lime. Whether it's 100 acres or 1/10 acre, you should first test the soil and get a prescription.


After the fertilizer and lime, if necessary, are down, you need only add your seed mix, and Whitetail Institute has three products ideal for such situations. No-Plow, Secret Spot and Bow Stand can be planted with minimal ground preparation sufficient to expose the soil to establish good seed-to-soil contact. They can tolerate a wide range of soil conditions and as little as three to four hours of sunlight per day. Further, they're fast growing and will provide nutrition and outstanding attraction for up to nine months.

Even if you aren't logging, you can still create small deer-attracting plots with the aforementioned blends and minimal equipment. All you need is willingness to work hard, a few hand tools and an opening in the canopy large enough to let sufficient sunlight in for three to four hours. The equipment list consists of seed, fertilizer and a rake. I actually prefer the rake because I can scarify the soil a little when I'm clearing my plot, which helps enhance germination. For seed and fertilizer, an area of 4,500 square feet (22 yards multiplied by 23 yards) calls for about four pounds of seed and one 50-pound bag of Triple-19 (or equivalent) fertilizer. The total cost is less than \$30.

To build the plot, rake the leaves, sticks and any vegetation away enough to expose the soil, and then broadcast the fertilizer and seed by hand or with a hand-held spreader. Walk over the area a few times to tamp down the soil. This will provide better seed-to-soil contact and enhance germination.

If you want bigger plots but don't own heavy equipment, there's another option. Most hunters own an ATV or know someone who does. Add a few small implements, such as a disc harrow and a spreader, and you can build medium-sized plots without a tractor, often in places you couldn't access with a tractor.

An ATV of 400 ccs or more will work, but bigger is better, and four-wheel drive is highly recommended. Preparation will vary with conditions, but you want to start with loose, bare soil. Treat and plant it the same as you would a larger plot. If you don't have a drag or culti-packer, ride over the plot a few times, flattening the soil before and after spreading the seeds to promote better seed-to-soil contact.

In addition to being quick, cheap and easy to build, smaller plots can also be built at the last minute. You can locate a hotspot just before, or even during, hunting season, plant it and then hunt it, all in less than a month. Your biggest limiting factors are sufficient rain and growing season. Obviously, you have to plant the plot to be able to hunt it. 



# The Future of Food Plotting

By Scott Bestul

Photos by Charles J. Alsheimer

**A**h, the crystal ball. The stuff I could have accomplished if I'd only had one, and the things I could still anticipate if one rested on my shelf. On second thought, scratch the shelf. If I had an instrument that foretold the future, I'd lock it up somewhere, only producing it at critical times.

I don't waste a lot of time longing for such a device, but I should have secured one before I pitched a story idea to the editors of this magazine. "How about a piece on the future of food plotting?" I asked innocently. When they assigned the story — this one — I think it was more out of pure amusement. As in, "OK, let's see how Bestul can trip himself up on this one."

Of course, I'm not qualified to foretell food plotting's future. But I quickly recovered when I realized I could do what I always do in such situations; defer to people a lot smarter than I am. With that in mind, here are some speculations from three men whose combined experience amounts to nearly 100 years of experience in the food plot business.

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## Steve Scott

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Vice-President of the Whitetail Institute, Scott has been in the business for almost 30 years. The savvy businessman maintains a bullish attitude for the future.

"I see us doing nothing but growing in the years ahead," he said. "More and more hunters are getting into food plotting, primarily because they know food plots work. The proof is there, both in photos like you see in our magazine but also the record books. Hunters have a far better chance at killing a record-book whitetail now than they ever did before we started providing products and information for deer management in '88. Certainly, we can't take all the credit for that, but we're certainly going to take some."

Another reason for Scott's optimism is the increasing number of hunters purchasing or leasing land they can manage.

"There's simply a greater investment in time and dollars in deer hunting than at any time before," he said. "Hunters start by just buying land to manage the deer they shoot or don't shoot. Then they're planting food plots, managing their timber and working on other habitat projects. Food plots play a huge role in



deer management, and that's great news for us."

When Imperial Whitetail Clover was introduced in 1988, it was the first clover specifically developed for whitetail deer. Will there be other ground-breaking introductions from the Alabama-based company?

"Well, we recently introduced Ambush, which featured lupine, a seed I'd guess 99 percent of hunters had never heard of," Scott said. "We continue to work on new varieties of everything in our current lineup, and even some off-the-wall stuff that may never see the light of day. But we've also introduced a new variety into Imperial Whitetail Clover that will make a great product even better. We just keep pushing the envelope, and I see some good things coming down the road."

Scott feels particularly gratified to see Whitetail Institute customers becoming more educated about not only Whitetail Institute products but food plotting and management in general.

"We've got a long way to go and a lot more people to reach, but when it comes to planting food plots, we just see more and more people concerned about dotting the I's and crossing the T's," he said. "Our soil testing service has grown every year, and every year we get tens of thousands of phone calls and emails with questions, which we love. And not to brag too hard, but more and more people are getting their hands on, and reading, *Whitetail News*. I think the serious deer hunter who doesn't read *Whitetail News* is probably a little behind the curve. That's how proud we are of the information that's in it."

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### Mark Trudeau

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As the director of certified research for the Whitetail Institute, Mark Trudeau knows the world of food plotting well. Perhaps more important, Trudeau is a devout and successful land manager who recognizes the importance of food plots and habitat work on his own farm and hunting property in rural Tennessee.

"Lots of people know the importance of food plots for successful deer hunting," Trudeau said. "But in my opinion, that number continues to grow. Food is everything to deer, and we're seeing more and more hunters recognize that at the end of the day, the most cost-effective investment they can make is to establish and maintain quality food plots."

Trudeau said even veteran food plotters have more frontiers to explore.

"Plot design is becoming a hot topic," he said. "Having a proper design — like an S-shape or a dog-leg that requires a buck to enter and work the entire plot to see all the does — is something still not on a lot of hunters' radar. Also, knowing how to hunt food plots effectively — which means getting to and from your stands with as little disturbance as possible and sometimes backing off the plot with stand locations are ideas many hunters are just catching on to. We plan to do an even better job of getting even more hunters up to speed on things like this."

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### Matt Harper

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One of the country's top experts on food plots, Harper is also a full-time employee in the ag industry. Given that the food plot industry sometimes follows the lead of agriculture, Harper is situated perfectly to serve as a forecaster for the future of food plotting.

"It's interesting to speculate on things like this," Harper said. "It's tempting to think, 'Well, we've done about all we can do, and there's

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nothing new in the world,' and there's a degree of truth to that. But it's also not entirely accurate."

For starters, Harper said, Whitetail Institute will keep looking for and developing new and better varieties of proven seeds as well as seeds most hunters have never heard of.

Harper sees more room for opportunity.

"Maybe there are seeds that we've never tried in a blend before, or a specific variety of seed that we've never offered to whitetail hunters, and deer just hammer it," he said. "We might come up with even more food plot seeds that are perfectly suited for the whitetail nutritional profile. This is something that cattle guys do all the time; grow a certain variety of corn, for example, with the specific carbohydrate levels they need. Or, guys who grow high-quality hay go to great lengths to create the maximum tonnage that meets specific requirements."

There's also a lot of unexplored frontier when it comes to soil prep and plot maintenance, Harper said.

"There are areas with very thin soils — I'm talking basically rock — and I've read some really interesting stuff on using composting to build organic matter and aid in water retention in spots like this," he said. "You're actually building soil where there is almost none. I expect we'll see more of this kind of experimentation coming from areas where growing good deer food is a real challenge."

Harper isn't afraid to explore out-there concepts or even potentially controversial ones as he contemplates the future.

"One of the big things in ag now is getting increasingly specific on the fertilizer needs, for example, on big agricultural fields," he said. "Farmers now soil sample across a field, and then use GPS to target areas that need more or less lime or fertilizer. This saves them money since they're not just applying the same amounts across an entire field. Something like this would obviously only work on a larger plot, but it's an example of another farming technique that in time, could cross over to food plotting."

Harper concluded by placing the food plotting world into perspective as we move toward the future.

"I think it's important how we position food plots in the conversations we have with others — hunters, non-hunters and anti-hunters — about what we do," he said. "If we speak about food plots as just another tool that helps us kill deer, it's one thing. If we recognize them as one important piece of habitat improvement, that's entirely something else. Veteran food plotters know that when they plant, for example, a one-acre clover plot, they're feeding a whole lot more animals than just the deer that feed there. So if we talk about the rabbits, the turkeys, the insects, the songbirds (and others) that feed on that clover, non-hunters and even anti-hunters will have a whole lot better chance of accepting the fact that we might kill a whitetail or two there every year." 🦌





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## Superior Attractiveness

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As with all Whitetail Institute forage products, No-Plow is exceptionally attractive to deer, and the reason is simple: attractiveness to deer is the overriding forage-development goal of the Whitetail Institute. Other research goals include rapid stand establishment, early seedling vigor, nutritional content, and tolerance of cold, heat and drought. But no matter how much protein a forage has, how quickly it establishes and grows, or how well it can tolerate tough climates, it will never make it to Whitetail Institute product status unless it's highly attractive to deer.

No-Plow is a blend of multiple, diverse forages. Each is highly attractive, and when combined in the exact ratios in which you'll find them in No-Plow, they're even more attractive. One reason is the different yet complementary forage components in the product. Forage grasses, annual clovers and brassica have always been the component groups in No-Plow, and the reason is simple: The performance of these components is outstanding, and they continue to be a reason why No-Plow maintains its dominant place in the market.

In its continuing quest to improve its products, the Whitetail Institute has also added another forage component to No-Plow: a specially selected radish. The radish's main function is to serve as a nurse crop as the other forages develop and then as an additional late-season food

source. The radishes also provide a secondary benefit to soil quality: Their thick roots leave spaces in the soil, which can be of great benefit in heavy soils that are compacted. Also, any radish tubers that are left after winter add organic matter to the soil as they break down at the end of the planting's life span.

No-Plow establishes and grows quickly, often appearing above ground just a few days after planting, and it starts attracting deer right away. Usually, deer tend to concentrate on the forage grasses first and then clovers. After the first frosts of fall arrive, the brassicas in No-Plow become even sweeter and continue to attract and hold deer into the coldest months, and the radishes also provide extremely attractive winter forage. After winter, the annual clovers continue to provide much-needed nutrition for deer as they recover their winter health losses and bucks begin to regrow antlers.

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## Versatility

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The Whitetail Institute developed No-Plow as an answer to a dilemma many hunters face: what to plant in areas that can't be accessed with equipment. However, as I hope you realized when you read the first part of this article, the Whitetail Institute's primary goal in designing No-Plow wasn't just to come up with a food plot product that could be planted with minimal seedbed preparation. No-Plow is designed to attract deer. In addition, it can be planted with minimal ground preparation or in a fully prepared seedbed (disked or tilled, existing vegetation removed and soil pH adjusted to 6.5-7.0). In fact, the Whitetail Institute publishes two sets of planting instructions for No-Plow; one for planting with minimal seedbed preparation and the other for planting in a fully prepared seedbed. (You can find the instructions on the back of the product bags and at whitetailinstitute.com.) Either way, No-Plow will attract and hold deer in a broad range of planting situations and soil types.

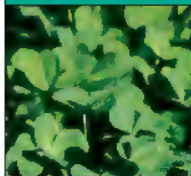
No-Plow can tolerate as little as three to four hours of broken, filtered or indirect sunlight per day. It's available in 9-pound bags that plant a half-acre and 25-pound bags that plant 1-1/2 acres. For more information on No-Plow, go to whitetailinstitute.com, or call (800) 688-3030. 🍂





# SAVE BIG With Whitetail News

## IMPERIAL WHITETAIL® CLOVER YOU SAVE \$55.00



Suggested Retail: \$279.96 (36 lbs. - 4.5 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$224.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 36 lb. quantities of Imperial Whitetail® Brand Clover (With Insight).

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 36 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL BEETS & GREENS™ YOU SAVE \$70.00



Suggested Retail: \$239.96 (24 lbs. - 4 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$169.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 24 lb. quantities of Imperial Beets & Greens™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$12.00 for shipping and handling for each 24 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL NO-PLOW™ YOU SAVE \$40.00



Suggested Retail: \$149.96 (50 lbs. - 3 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$109.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 50 lb. quantities of Imperial NO-PLOW™ Wildlife Seed Blend.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 50 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL EXTREME™ YOU SAVE \$65.00



Sugg. Retail: \$289.96 (46 lbs. - 2 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$224.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 46 lb. quantities of Imperial EXTREME™ Seed Blend.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 46 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL ALFA-RACK PLUS™ YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$289.96 (33 lbs. - 2.5 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$224.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 33 lb. quantities of Imperial Alfa-Rack PLUS™ Alfalfa-Clover Blend.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 33 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL FUSION™ YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$289.96 (27.75 lbs. - 4.5 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$224.94**

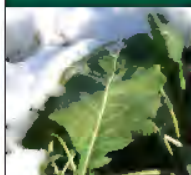
Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 27.75 lb. quantities of Imperial FUSION™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 27.75 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL WINTER-GREENS™ YOU SAVE \$70.00



Suggested Retail: \$239.96 (24 lbs. - 4 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$169.96**

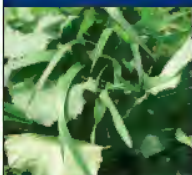
Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 24 lb. quantities of Imperial Winter-Greens™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$12.00 for shipping and handling for each 24 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL PURE ATTRACTION™ YOU SAVE \$35.00



Suggested Retail: \$94.96 (52 lbs. - 1 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$59.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 52 lb. quantities of Imperial Pure Attraction™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 52 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL TALL TINE TUBERS™ YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$199.96 (24 lbs. - 4 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$134.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 24 lb. quantities of Imperial Tall Tine Tubers™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$12.00 for shipping and handling for each 24 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL WHITETAIL EDGE™ YOU SAVE \$65.00



Suggested Retail: \$289.96 (52 lbs. - 2 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$224.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 52 lb. bags of Imperial Edge™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 52 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL DOUBLE-CROSS™ YOU SAVE \$75.00



Suggested Retail: \$299.96 (36 lbs. - 4.5 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$224.96**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 36 lb. quantities of Imperial Double-Cross™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 36 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL "CHIC" MAGNET™ YOU SAVE \$50.00



Suggested Retail: \$139.94 (9 lbs. - 3 Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$89.94**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 9 lb. quantities of Imperial "Chic" Magnet™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$9.50 for shipping and handling for each 9 lbs. ordered. (Canadian residents call for shipping charges.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



COUPON PRICES NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE



# DISCOUNT COUPONS - Order Today!

## IMPERIAL WHITETAIL OATS PLUS™ YOU SAVE \$13.00



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

**Price with coupon: \$36.95**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 45 lb. bags of Whitetail Oats Plus™.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 45 lbs. ordered. (Not available in Canada.) Please enclose with shipping and payment information.



## IMPERIAL AMBUSH™ YOU SAVE \$20.00



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

**Price with coupon: \$99.96**

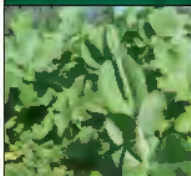
Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 40 lb. quantities of Imperial Ambush.

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 WINTER PEAS™ YOU SAVE \$10.00



Suggested Retail: \$120.00 (44 lbs. - 1-Acre Planting)

**Price with coupon: \$109.98**

Please send \_\_\_\_\_ 44 lb. quantities of Imperial Winter Peas.

TOTAL Including shipping and handling \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please add \$18.00 for shipping and handling for each 44 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.

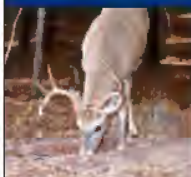
Call for larger quantities.

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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# You Gotta KILL SOMETHING Now and Then

By Craig Dougherty

Photos by the Author

**M**y son and I have more than 30 years of quality deer management and big deer under our belt, and we've learned a thing or two about killing big bucks. One of the most important lessons we've learned is that everything you kill doesn't have to be big.

There was a day when we would never think about taking a buck that was not fully developed. In our part of the world, that often means a 5-year-old or older deer. That's no longer the case. We now will occasionally take a buck that has not realized its full potential. The reason? Sometimes, you just have to kill something.

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## New Hunters and Seniors Get the Green Light

---

We have always green-lighted beginning hunters at our camp. That means children and adults who have had very little deer hunting success. Research tells us that beginning hunters need to be successful if they are to stay in the sport for the long haul. We need every hunter we can get, and today's new hunter is tomorrow's rock picker or wood-box filler. Besides, there's nothing more exciting than seeing a beginning hunter with his first deer. The joy is downright contagious.

On occasion, our camp is graced by a senior hunter. These men and or women have earned their seat at the head of our hunting camp table. Their eyes might not be as sharp as they once were, and their reflexes might be a little slower, but they honor our camp with their presence. These hunters have the green light, too. Most of them have killed their share of big bucks, but many are happy to take just one more buck of any size. It's in their DNA. You never know when your next buck

might be your last one. We want our seniors to kill plenty of next bucks before their last buck honors our camp game pole.

Holding senior hunters to the same standards they had when there was fire in their eyes and a spring in their step is foolish. And the fool can be the senior or the other members of the hunting group. Seniors need to give themselves permission to take a lesser buck now and again. You never know, do you? Younger hunters need to support their seniors along the way. Everybody will be the better for it.





I've always found it somewhat condescending to automatically green-light a hunter with a disability. We let our disabled hunting friends find their own comfort levels when it comes to killing big bucks. If they want to wait on Mr. Big, it's their choice. A nice young, fat buck is just fine. It matters not to us which way their decision plays out. We make sure they know that a young buck here or a young buck there won't make a bit of difference in our management program.

These green-light scenarios might seem like no-brainers, but some hunters are so hung up on killing only big bucks that they sometimes lose track of why we hunt. They have forgotten about the fun and fellowship that comes from hugging a 12-year-old child staring at his first buck or slapping an old hunter on the back with heartfelt congratulations.

Not all new recruits are ready to take a lesser buck. Some have watched so much hunting TV and consumed so much big buck Kool-Aid they think they are committing a mortal sin if they even look at a young buck. A few years ago, we hosted a hunting industry guy who had never killed a bow buck. We green-lighted him for any deer that offered a good shot. But he passed sit after sit. It was killing him, but he was all hung up on not disappointing us because we were big-buck guys.

On his final afternoon in camp, my son, Neil, took the hunter aside and explained that we had almost 20 yearling bucks using the place, 15 of which would be dead by next season, and one or two that would probably wind up under an 18-wheeler by the end of the weekend. In other words, one young buck with an arrow tucked in his rib cage would not wreck our management program.

That night, we celebrated his first buck, a trophy 6-pointer. It was one of our fondest memories. He was thrilled, and so were we. And so was Katie with her first bow buck and Marie with her first rifle kill. The first-timer list goes on and on. There's something special about that first deer.

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### Kill Something Already

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Some hunters are so hung up on hunting (or trying to hunt) big bucks that they are making themselves miserable. Through the years, we have spent loads of time counseling hunters on how to get the most out of their properties. We tell them what to plant and how to plant it, and we tell them what to cut and what to let grow. But mostly, we tell them what to kill. They are generally fine on the doe side of the equation, but some hunters have set the big buck bar so high they can't clear it with a hook-and-ladder truck. These gung-ho hunters pass up dozens of shootable bucks every year, as they are waiting for Mr. Big. But Mr. Big rarely, if ever, exists in northern New Jersey, central Pennsylvania, southern Alabama or most places we hunt. These guys are waiting for B&C bucks, which are few and far between. In fact, 160-inch bucks are the stuff of magazine covers and TV shows, and 200-inchers are almost non-existent.

If you want to hold out for a big buck, set the bar at the top 10 percent of bucks in your area. A local taxidermist or meat cutter can fill you in on what kind of deer come out of your area. If 10 percent is not challenging enough, raise the bar to the top five percent. Believe it or not, we have clients who make themselves miserable by passing everything they see. There hasn't been a happy dance around the game pole in years. Neil is quick to point out to clients that you cannot stockpile bucks, and a property can only accommodate so many mature old warriors. Half of the young bucks will be elsewhere by the

time they are two.

We worry about clients that have set the bar so high they haven't killed anything in years. Planting plots and cutting brush only goes so far. We plead with them to kill something, as it'll keep them in the game and coming back for more. We have some that have set unreasonable goals for themselves and haven't a prayer of meeting them. They've lost the joy of hunting and are headed for a for-sale sign on the front gate. They are burning out quickly. We don't want to lose them as clients or, for that matter, fellow hunters. They have set their sights so high they might never kill a buck — ever. They are on their way out and don't even know it.

A full game pole goes a long way toward keeping us in the hunt. Sometimes, you just have to kill something. It's why we hunt. It's a DNA thing.

---

### Just Take a Buck Now and Then

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Sometimes, something inside tells you to kill something. I've evolved (my word) to the point where it just happens. I don't really set out to deliberately take a mid-aged buck. It just happens. My heart wins out over my head. Ten years ago, I would have beaten myself up if I took a "lesser" buck. Today, I do it without hesitation or remorse. Maybe the buck carried himself a certain way, or the way the sun lit up his antlers, or he looked like a shooter through the scope at 200 yards. Or maybe it's the realization that this could be my last season — or his. It happens more often, and I'm OK with it. My heart overrules my head, and I like it that way. I listen to my heart, and when it comes to hunting, my heart seldom lies. I've been to the mountaintop of big bucks and seen the promised land — and that land is about more than big antlers. The world won't end if you take a buck now and then that you just wanted to kill. 🦌





# 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 liquid, 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**

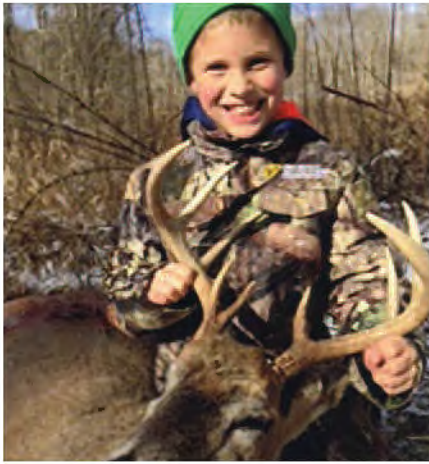
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*The future of our sport!*

## Caden Day – North Carolina



I just turned eight years old and I love to hunt with my crossbow. This past January, my dad and I took a trip from our home in North Carolina to our hunting cabin on our farm in southeast Ohio. I love spending time there and we get to do a lot of hunting. Our second evening hunt was very cold. It was six degrees out with a minus 10 degrees wind chill and snowing! We decided to sit in a blind overlooking our Winter-Greens plot. We waited four hours in the blind and watched several deer come and go. My dad started to get cold and kept asking if we could go. I finally had to tell him to be quiet and sit still or he would scare the deer and that I wasn't leaving until I killed a buck. We stayed, and 30 minutes later two bucks came out of the woods and started feeding 25 yards away. I had to quietly turn around and get my crossbow ready for the shot. I remember my dad telling me to take my time and shoot when I was ready. My heart was pounding. Slowly, I took the safety off and squeezed the trigger. We heard the arrow hit the deer, then saw it run off into the woods. We decided to wait until the morning to look for it. I was so excited I could hardly get to sleep that night. I was really hoping we would be able to find it, and we did. The deer was found about 150 yards away from where I shot him. It was a 9-point with a split brow tine. I am so proud of my first buck and will always remember that awesome day hunting with my dad!



## Ben Hanson – Indiana

It finally got cold for a few days and the deer started smashing the Winter-Greens. Check out the great first deer that my wife Alyson harvested last year. She is now officially hooked! Never thought in a million years she would enjoy this experience. She's a corporate world kinda girl. She does marketing for renewable energy and helps raise our two boys. Her buck grossed 169-4/8 inches and net 164-4/8 inches (Photo 1). We had such a great year. My buck scored 151 inches (Photo 2), Alyson's 169 inches and dad's scored 173 inches. That's me in Photo 3 with my dad's buck. They were all harvested off Winter-Greens and all within a 1/4 mile of each other. Great first deer for this young lady! Wanted to thank you again, Whitetail Institute, for a great product!



## Rachael Johnson – Wisconsin

Our 10 year old daughter, Rowan, insisted that her dad plant Whitetail Institute's Winter-Greens in preparation for her first hunt. It proved successful for her during Wisconsin's Youth Hunt, on Oct. 8. With a perfect shot, Rowan took this doe at 35 yards out of her food plot just before dusk. Thank you Whitetail Institute for helping make our daughter's first hunt successful and a great lifelong memory for her and our family! 🍖

*First Deer is presented and sponsored by TRACT OPTICS. Visit them online at [www.tractoptics.com](http://www.tractoptics.com).*

*Email your First Deer photos and story to [info@whitetailinstitute.com](mailto:info@whitetailinstitute.com) or send them to*

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



# WHITETAIL INSTITUTE APPAREL

## 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

## SHORT SLEEVE TEES

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



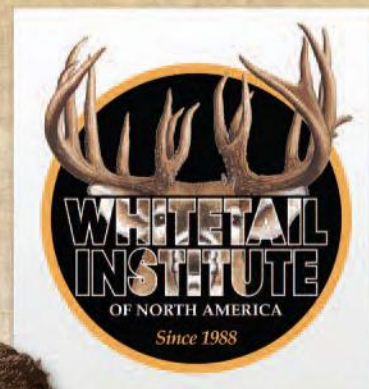
Front Chest Design



Upper Back Design



Upper Back Design



**Whitetail Institute**  
"RESEARCH = RESULTS"

Front Chest Design

## Whitetail Institute Short Sleeve Tees

Available sizes:

S to XXXL

Available colors:

Black, Yellow



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Fax Orders To: 334-286-9723



## Whitetail Institute Official Logo Short Sleeve Tees

Available sizes:

S to XXXL

Available color:

White

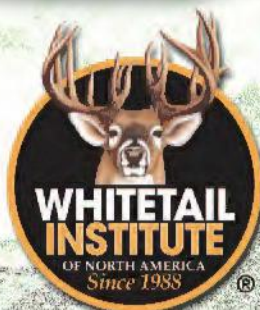


# Imperial Whitetail Clover FIRST in the FIELD SINCE 1988



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.



## Whitetail Institute

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**SOFTSIDE**  
BLINDS

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- Heavy Duty Double-Stitched Cover
- Black Powder-Coated Steel Frame
- 6X6 Octagonal Floor Plan
- Double-Zipper Design Allows Windows To Open In Any Configuration
- See-Through Camo Mesh Adjustable Window Covers
- Vertical Windows: (4) 10" wide X 46" high
- Horizontal Windows: (3) 30" wide X 14" high (1 Door Window) 17" wide X 10" high
- Interior Size: 70" wide X 70" deep X 77" high

6.5 Feet Tall

6 Feet Wide

6 Feet Wide



[www.RedneckBlinds.com](http://www.RedneckBlinds.com)

877.523.9986

