

WHITETAIL News



Volume 28, No. 1
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560 INCHES OF ANTLER

An Unforgettable Season

Story On Page 6

Introducing Two New Products:

VISION — New Perennial Food Plot Product
Story On Page 5

THRIVE — 30-06 Nutritional Supplement
For Fall and Winter
Story On Page 12

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Imperial Alfa-Rack Plus: Diverse Forage Plants Ensure Alfa-Rack Success and Popularity

Managing for Big Bucks in the East

by Jeremy Flinn

Departments

4 Message from Ray Scott

22 The Weed Doctor

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

24 Record Book Bucks

Stories and Photos

39 Food Plot Planting Dates

44 Customers do the Talking

Stories and Photos

68 First Deer – The Future of Our Sport

In This Issue...

5 On its 30th Anniversary the Whitetail Institute Introduces Imperial Whitetail Vision

Vision is a blend of Imperial Whitetail Clover, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory and WINA-210 kale.

6 Iowa's Clover King

by Scott Bestul

Roger Sapper's unforgettable season: 560 inches of antler.

12 Introducing New 30-06 Thrive Nutritional Supplement for Fall and Winter

14 The Whitetail Institute's Certified Research Program

By Jon Cooner

An integral part of "Research equals Results"

18 A Special Place Called Deer Camp

by Scott Bestul

26 Helpful Tips About Disks and Rototillers for Effective Seedbed Preparation

by Mark Trudeau

32 Imperial Whitetail Beets & Greens

34 Is it Time to Replant your Perennial Food Plot?

by Jon Cooner

40 Mentoring: The Gift that Keeps on Giving

by R.G. Bernier

46 Imperial Whitetail Tall Tine Tubers

48 Annuals or Perennials? Decisions, Decisions

by Michael Veine

51 Whitetail Institute Customers Do the Talking About Whitetail Institute's Soil Testing Service

54 Trail Cameras and 30-06... A Perfect Match

by Matt Harper

This combination lets you get great photos, make better management decisions and improve the overall health of your deer herd.



14



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A Message from **RAY SCOTT**

Founder and President of the Whitetail Institute of North America

In retrospect, the greatest source of satisfaction and pride is that Whitetail Institute and Bassmasters have been built on the principles of good stewardship and conservation practices to ensure that these great sports can be enjoyed for generations to come.

A Double Anniversary in 2018

Birthdays have a way of sneaking up on you, especially as you get older. So, I can honestly say when I realized I had not one but two milestone anniversaries to celebrate in 2018, I was caught unaware.

But yes, it was 30 years ago, in 1988, that I founded the Whitetail Institute of North America and 20 years earlier, in 1968, that I founded B.A.S.S (Bassmasters). And I'm happy to say both are going strong.

What a privilege it has been to have careers in bass fishing and whitetail hunting — the royalty of American fish and game as far as I'm concerned. If I understood one thing as I pursued my interest in these outdoor sports, it was the unique passion that drove the hunter and the angler. And I discovered just how far they would go to improve their sport and be better outdoorsmen.

On this the 30th anniversary of the Whitetail Institute, I think the story of the conception of the Whitetail Institute is worth repeating.

As many hunters did in the '80s — and before and after — we planted green fields — mostly agricultural crops — with the main objective of attracting whitetail. One day in hunting season, I was perched on a field of crops planted "buffet style." There were the standard oats and wheat and rye, but this particular year, I added another selection — clover — recommended by my feed-and-seed man in Montgomery, AL. To my amazement, the deer kept walking through the other crops to get to the clover. Again and again.

Well, my curiosity was very aroused at that point, and I immediately set out to track down and research this particular brand of clover and the rest as they say is history.

But I'll just say that Imperial Whitetail Clover grew out of that moment along with the realization that nutrition and not just attraction was the real magic in plantings for whitetail. When the focus changed from just attraction to also include better-quality deer and improved management, the world of whitetail hunting changed for the better. It is no coincidence there has been a significant increase in the average annual number of record-book bucks taken since the founding of the Whitetail Institute.

So, on the occasion of these special anniversaries, I have only one more thing to say: only in America. Only in America could a guy like me succeed with ideas and dreams to improve the sports he loved. And that's all I had: ideas and dreams.

And in retrospect the greatest source of satisfaction and pride is that Whitetail Institute and Bassmasters have been built on the principles of good stewardship and conservation practices to ensure that these great sports can be enjoyed for generations to come.

That is cause for celebration in 2018!


Ray Scott

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On its 30th Anniversary Whitetail Institute Introduces Imperial Whitetail



On its anniversary, the Whitetail Institute is proud to announce its newest food plot product: Imperial Whitetail Vision. A special blend of Imperial Whitetail Clover, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory and WINA-210 kale, Vision takes the combined performance of Whitetail Institute perennials and annual brassica to a new level.

No other Whitetail Institute product has the Whitetail Institute's philosophy and focus better than Vision. It was Ray Smith's vision that led to the founding of the Whitetail Institute and the introduction of Imperial Whitetail Clover. And the Whitetail Institute's vision and relentless pursuit of unequalled product performance keep Whitetail Institute products at the top of the industry year after year. Whitetail Institute spares no effort or expense ensuring that its products are the best. And that applies to existing and new products.

Vision builds off the exceptional success of Imperial Whitetail Double-Cross, which has its place in the Whitetail Institute's food plot lineup. The idea behind Double-Cross was to provide the exceptional performance of Imperial Whitetail Clover, the No. 1 food plot product in the world, with the proven superiority of Whitetail Institute forage brassicas to increase early season growth and provide even more tonnage early and late hunting seasons. Vision is a broadened version of that same design. It has been expanded to deliver top performance.

Even though Vision and Double-Cross share a basic design concept, the improvements designed into Vision make it more than the next evolution of Double-Cross. We'll take a deeper look at why that's the case, including descriptions of the forage components of Vision and the role each plays in the overall performance of the product. Remember, Imperial Whitetail Clover, WINA-100 perennial forage chicory and WINA-210 kale are only available in Whitetail Institute products.

Imperial Whitetail Clover: One improvement Vision features is the Whitetail Institute's latest proprietary clover varieties. These varieties, which are included in Imperial Whitetail Clover, bring the same superior attraction and high protein content to Vision year-round.

WINA-100 Perennial Forage Chicory: WINA-100 Chicory, without question one of the most versatile Whitetail Institute perennial forages, is included in Vision for several reasons.

The most important is attractiveness to deer, which the addition of WINA-100 chicory provides in two ways. First, WINA-100 chicory is highly attractive to deer. In fact, it has proven vastly more attractive to whitetails than any other chicory the Whitetail Institute has tested. The reason is its sustained palatability. Unlike other chicory varieties, which tend to get waxy and stemmy through time, WINA-100 chicory stays tender and succulent even as it matures. Second, as a component of Vision, WINA-100 chicory also boosts attraction by offering even greater variety in the same food plot.


In addition to attractiveness, WINA-100 chicory is extremely high in protein, and its roots can extend several feet deep into the soil — a characteristic that helps make Vision even more drought tolerant.

WINA-210 Annual Kale: WINA-210 Kale, another proprietary Whitetail Institute forage component of Vision, is one of the most attractive brassicas the Whitetail Institute has tested. WINA-210 was developed by selecting candidate kale varieties and then repeating cycles of isolating those that best exhibited rapid emergence and attractiveness to deer. At the end of each cycle, only the offspring that best

performed were selected for further testing. The result, WINA-210 Kale, passed Whitetail Institute testing to establish itself as a fast-growing, quickly, and provide superior attraction. Unlike other brassicas, WINA-210 kale is sweeter as the first frosts of fall increase its sugar content even further.

Vision delivers unsurpassed attraction and nutrition through its precise blend of perennial and annual forages. The Imperial Whitetail Clover and Whitetail Institute chicory and kale components of Vision provide abundant protein for antler growth and overall herd health. Vision can last up to five years from one planting. Whitetail Institute kale increases first-year attraction even further and provides the carbohydrates deer need during fall and

Vision is designed for sites with loam, light clay soil, and that receives at least four hours of indirect sunlight a day. Avoid areas that hold excessive moisture or drain too quickly. Vision should be planted in late summer or early fall. See page 39 for your planting dates.

For more on Imperial Whitetail Vision, visit whitetailinstitute.com. Call Whitetail Institute at (800) 688-3030. 



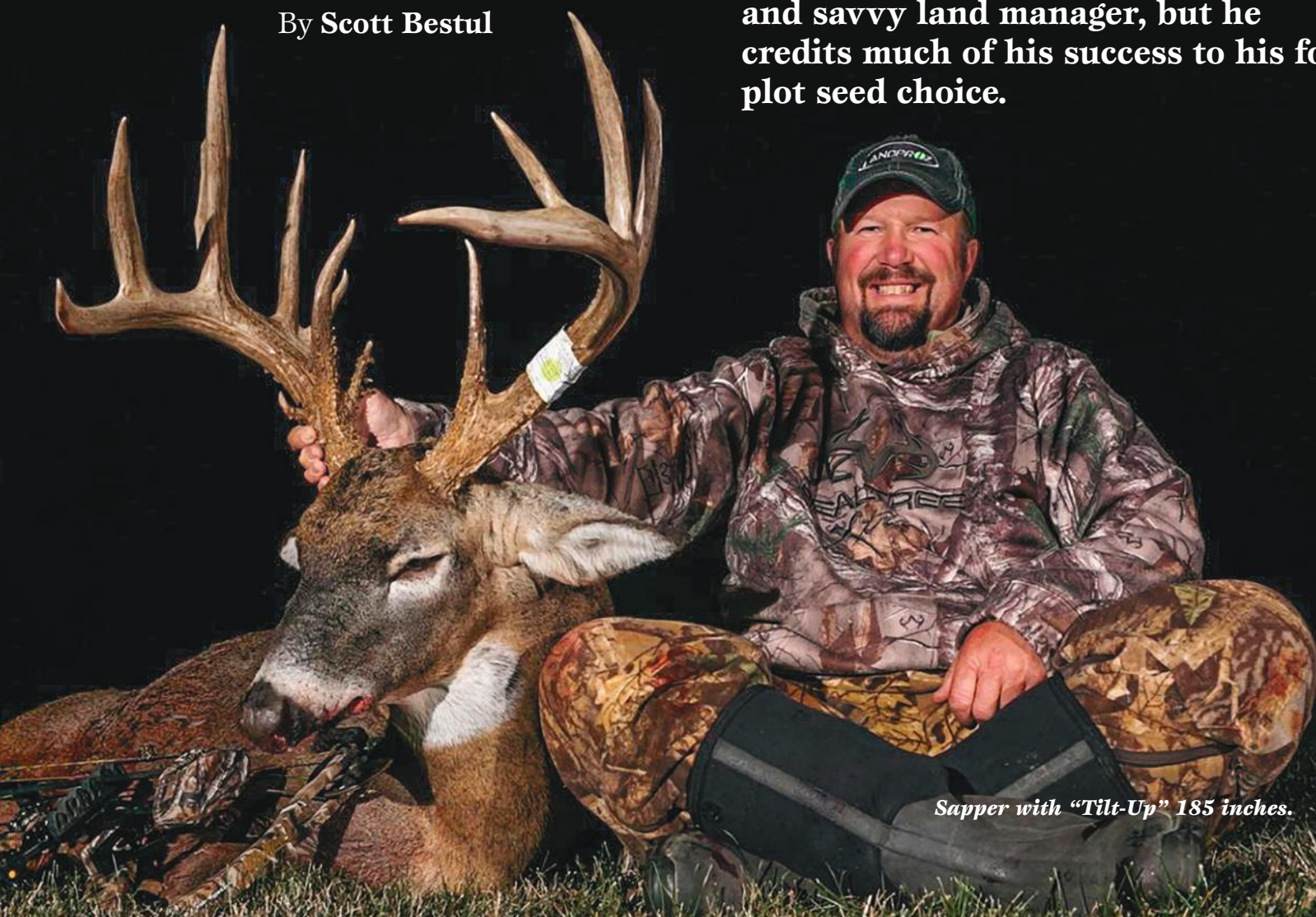
560 INCHES OF ANTLER

An Unforgettable Season!

**WHITETAIL INSTITUTE
PRODUCTS PLAY SIGNIFICANT
ROLE IN HUNTER'S
REMARKABLE SEASON**

By Scott Bestul

Roger Sapper is too humble to call himself king of anything, but the Iowa whitetail expert could rule any discussion about the importance of clover in a deer management plan. Sapper has owned his Iowa farm for seven years, and the property has produced some tremendous bucks in that time. In fact, including this past season he has killed nine bucks that score over 160 inches. The property has no high fences and the deer are free ranging. Sapper is obviously a gifted hunter and savvy land manager, but he credits much of his success to his food plot seed choice.



Sapper with "Tilt-Up" 185 inches.



"Tomahawk" 202 inches.

"Clover is king in my book," he said. "It's the cornerstone for all my food plot plans."

Although readers of this magazine have no shortage of testimonials to ponder regarding Imperial Whitetail Clover and other Whitetail Institute products, Sapper's thumbs-up deserves special attention. This past fall, Sapper put his tag on three exceptional bucks, all taken on a relatively small property where Whitetail Institute products played a significant role. Here's his amazing story.

Unforgettable Season

Before exploring the nuts and bolts of how Sapper manages land and hunts whitetails, it's worthwhile to shine a light on his incredible season last year. Going into fall, Sapper was determined to devote most of his hunting effort to a buck he'd named "Tomahawk," a 200-class giant the Hawkeye State hunter knew well.

"I had hundreds of pics of that buck over a four-year span," Sapper said. "I don't start keeping pics of a buck until he's at least 2-1/2 years old, so I knew Tomahawk was at least six years old last fall."

Sapper's target buck was not only gigantic. He was also eerily predictable.

"He actually lived in a patch of timber right behind my house," Sapper said with a laugh. "My farm is a mix of thick brush and cedars, farm fields,

food plots and hardwood ridges. Tomahawk liked this patch of blackberry brush that was so thick you could hardly walk into it, much less through it. He'd bed up there, and adjacent to that thicket was an Imperial Whitetail Clover plot, and beyond that a cornfield. I had two cameras set up for him; one pointed into the clover plot, the other into the timber, overlooking some scrapes."

Sapper's cameras captured dozens of pics of Tomahawk, many of them in daylight.

"When our season opened Oct. 1, I had a game plan in place, which was to hunt him over the clover," Sapper said. "But



"Perfect 10" 173 inches.

“Goalpost” 202 inches.



I needed a southwest wind in order to do that, and we don't get a lot of that here in the fall. So, I kept studying pictures, and I realized that, on a northwest wind, Tomahawk would be on his feet an hour before dark, feed in the clover and then head toward the corn. That's when I knew I had to change my setup because I couldn't hunt the clover plot with a northwest wind."

Fortunately, Sapper knew how to do that.

"I have a Redneck blind that I've mounted on a grain cart that I can tow just about anywhere," Sapper said. "So I hauled it to the edge of that cornfield. There's a little finger of brush and cedar trees that runs up into that corn, so I parked the blind right at the tip of that finger and then mowed a little path around the edge of the corn."

Though Tomahawk had a relaxed personality and wasn't afraid of daylight travel, killing him was anything but easy.

"I sat there every day the wind was right and never saw him," Sapper said. "Finally, on Oct. 25, I got lucky. The sun had just hit the tree tops, and the wind was just still. I happened to look out and saw some milkweed fluff drifting right toward where I thought he'd come from, so I just shut down all the windows and prayed my scent wouldn't get out and spook him. About 10 minutes later, I looked up, and he

was coming right to me. He walked to within 15 yards of the blind before I knew it, and now I had to get those windows opened up without him seeing or hearing that, and then get a shot.

"Somehow I pulled it off. Tomahawk was so close. I remember coming to full draw and then double-checking to make sure my arrow wouldn't hit the bottom of the blind window. I looked through my peep at the deer, and then pulled my face away to look at the broadhead and see if it would clear. Finally, I settled in, took a deep breath and took the shot. I could see right off I'd made a good hit, and Tomahawk ran off about 60 yards before tipping over. It was pretty amazing, walking up to see him lying there after seeing all those pictures and dreaming about it for months. Tomahawk scored 202 B&C inches.

But Sapper was far from finished. The farm held two other monster bucks that were on his radar, and one of them — a giant he'd named "Tilt-Up" — was also getting active on trail cam.

"Tilt-Up" actually loved that same clover plot that Tomahawk did, but I think Tomahawk was a little more dominant and pushed him out," Sapper said. "I had cameras on the other end of the farm, where a logging road comes down a hardwood ridge close to a bedding area.

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Bucks love to scrape on that road, and when I checked my camera, Tilt-Up was back there in daylight, hitting scrapes.”

So, Sapper hitched up his Redneck blind setup, hauled it to the remote logging road and set up for Tilt-Up.

“He was an interesting buck,” Sapper said. “I had several different encounters with him the year before. He’d come in to grunting or rattling, and I passed several shots at him. I guessed him in the 150s, but I knew he was young. I won’t shoot a buck here until he’s at least five years old, so he got a pass last fall. I could tell from the pics I was getting this year that he’d really blown up.”

Though he had good wind direction, Sapper’s first two hunts for Tilt-Up were unsuccessful. But on the evening of Oct. 28, everything came together — for the second time in four days — for the whitetail nut.

“About an hour before dark, I saw a buck come out of a thicket and start walking toward me,” Sapper said. “I never leave my house without binoculars around my neck, but in all the hubbub with Tomahawk, I’d managed to misplace them. So, I’m looking through my rangefinder — which has a little magnification — and trying to decide if the buck is Tilt-Up. Finally, he stops to work a scrape only 40 yards away, and by then, I could tell it was him. It looked for a minute like he was going to walk right toward the blind. He was standing there, listening and watching for does. I know how quick those situations can go bad, so I came to full draw, and when he turned broadside I buried the pin on him and took the shot. I could see the arrow hit perfect, and he ran off toward the thick stuff. But he only went 50 yards and piled up. I couldn’t believe it. In the space of four days, I’d shot the two biggest bucks on my farm. Tilt-Up grossed 185 inches.”

Iowa resident landowners are allowed two bucks with archery gear, plus a third on a primitive-weapons late-season tag (which can be a bow or muzzleloader kill).

“I knew I could still hunt for a third buck, but to tell the truth, at that point, it wasn’t really even on my mind,” Sapper said. “October wasn’t even over yet. So, there was a whole month of bowhunting, plus two shotgun seasons before I could even think of going again. I knew of one more buck I’d be happy to shoot, but he had a lot of hunting to survive before I could chase him.”

But of course, the buck — a pretty 10-pointer Sapper called “The Perfect Ten” — survived.

“He was another buck I knew really well,” Sapper said. “I had pics of him from when he was 3-1/2 and he was all over the farm. When he was 4-1/2, I figured he’d score about 160. Two years ago, I saw him during the late season, and I was really trying to decide. He honestly hadn’t grown a whole bunch. I figured he was still right there at 160 inches. I decided he probably wasn’t going to get any bigger, and maybe I should just take him. During the late muzzleloader hunt, I finally caught up with him in a food plot. I was watching him and looking for a shot when something spooked a bunch of does he was feeding with. He followed them off the field, and that was that.”



Sapper's Redneck blind mounted on a grain cart!

But the extra year of growth was just what the Perfect Ten needed.

“When this past season came around, I knew from pictures he’d made a good jump in growth,” Sapper said. “So, I got the Redneck blind out again and hauled it right to the spot where I’d killed Tomahawk. It was perfect for a northwest wind, and there was good food there with the clover and corn. The week of Christmas, we had a good cold front come in, and I set up in the Redneck. I suppose it sounds almost too simple, but the Perfect Ten came out, and I got the shot. All of a sudden, an amazing season turned almost miraculous.”

The Perfect Ten sported incredible main beams and a 21-inch inside spread. It scored 173 inches. Sapper’s season included three bucks with a combined score of 560 inches. For stats-nuts, that’s an average score of over 186 inches.

Set it up Right

Obviously, any of those whitetails would qualify for buck-of-a-lifetime status for most of us, and it would be oh-so-tempting to say Sapper just had a rabbit’s foot surgically implanted somewhere this past fall. Trouble is, the modest Iowan has been killing fantastic bucks on his farm for years.

“I think it’s really important to study things before you even start working on a new property,” he said. “I’ll spend hours staring at aerial photos, trying to determine where the best places for food plots will be. I take into account things like nearby bedding areas, travel routes and prevailing wind directions. And something that a lot of people don’t think enough about is entry and exit routes. You need to be able to get into and back out of hunting areas without alerting a bunch of deer.”

As noted earlier, Sapper places Imperial Whitetail Clover at the forefront of his food plot planning.

“Clover is king in my book,” he said “but I also use Winter-Greens and Tall Tine Tubers. The first plot I put in was planted in Winter-Greens on a ridge behind my house where I killed my first good buck — a deer I called “Goalpost” that scored 202 inches. I was amazed at the pull Winter-Greens had on deer. Here in Iowa, there’s no shortage of food. There’s corn and beans and sometimes alfalfa within easy reach of deer whenever they want it. But I’ve learned that those small food plots situated close to cover are really attractive to bucks.

“A friend of mine taught me a while back that even when they’re hitting a regular row-crop like corn or beans, whitetails will want to hit a green food source first,” Sapper said. “And I tell you what, that’s absolutely true. If my plot needs a break from clover, I’ll plant Winter-Greens or Tall Tine Tubers in there. And even in late season, when deer are supposedly all about corn and beans, just about every deer will hit that green stuff first. I’ve killed some of my best bucks by setting up my Whitetail Institute products in a small plot the deer use on their way to a destination plot.”

Finally, by having several quality food sources spread out and close to prime cover, Sapper has learned that it’s much easier to keep mul-

tiples bucks — even mature animals — content to stay in a relatively small area.

“The first big one I killed on this farm, the buck I called Goalpost, I shot on a Winter-Greens plot of a couple acres,” he said. “When I created that plot, I left one oak tree in the middle, where I put a ladder stand. The night I shot Goalpost, there were 10 bucks feeding in that plot that were 150 inches or better. And then Goalpost walked out. That tells me about the power of Winter-Greens but also of having good habitat and cover nearby. If there wasn’t thick stuff close to that plot where bucks could space themselves out and feel comfortable, I don’t think I’d have ever seen that.”

Sapper closed our conversation with more incredible humility. Even after the season he had, he gives all the glory to God for producing such awesome animals. He said he just tries to help make the habitat where they live the best it can be. He also said he is thankful to the Lord for leading him to move to Iowa 12 years ago.

Conclusion

Although Iowa is certainly a special place for anyone obsessed with big whitetails, what Sapper accomplished is remarkable, even for the Hawkeye State.

“Those three bucks I tagged last year were a perfect example,” he said. “While I talk about them being on the opposite ends of my farm, when you actually look at the spots they were faithful to, they were all within a half-mile of each other. That just further proves to me the importance of setting up a farm well, giving deer what they want and need and hunting right.” 🍷

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THRIVETM

30-06 Thrive is the fourth product in the 30-06 lineup. The other three (Imperial Whitetail 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin supplement, 30-06 Plus Protein Mineral/Vitamin Supplement and 30-06 Mineral Supplement Block) are designed to be used in spring and summer. They're scientifically formulated to provide the specific nutrition deer need to help maximize antler growth, keep does in top shape during the late stages of pregnancy, increase milk production for newborn fawns and promote overall herd health. New Thrive brings the Whitetail Institute's lineup of 30-06 products full circle by helping deer maintain body weight and overall health during fall and winter.

To see why this is so important, think about your favorite pro or NCAA Division 1 sports team. It can be the top-level college division

Most top-level athletes follow strict nutritional programs all year. For optimum results, their nutritional programs change during the year to meet different requirements. During active competition, for example, nutrition should be tailored to help the athlete perform at the highest level, but an athlete's off-season nutritional program should help them recuperate from the previous season's hard knocks and then return to top condition for the start of the next season.

The same is true for deer. It's no secret that fall and especially winter can be rough on deer. The rut, dwindling food sources and energy-sapping winter weather can take a heavy toll on deer health, and bucks can lose up to 20 percent of their body weight. Thrive is scientifically formulated with a specific balance of energy, protein, mineral and vitamin components that help deer maintain body weight and

overall health during fall and winter. It is nutrient-dense for winter stamina, helps deer maintain muscle mass and replenishes critical minerals and vitamins. It also includes antioxidant nutrients that help deer maintain a healthy digestive system and aid in muscle and tissue recovery. Thrive also contains Devour, the Whitetail Institute's exclusive scent and flavor enhancer, which is extremely attractive to deer.

Antler Growth in Bucks is a Secondary Characteristic

Antler growth in bucks is referred to as a secondary characteristic, which means it isn't the top nutritional priority during spring and summer until a buck recovers the physical losses he sustained during the preceding winter. In other words, the less physical ground a buck has to make up after winter, the sooner he can devote more nutritional resources to antler growth the next spring.

Imperial Whitetail 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein Mineral/Vitamin Supplements are designed for the active performance season of deer: spring and summer, when bucks are growing antlers, and does are in the later stages of pregnancy and then giving birth to fawns. Thrive is designed for fall and winter. It helps keep deer healthier and helps reduce weight loss. This lets bucks devote more nutritional resources to antler growth as soon as possible the following spring.

Additional Information About 30-06 Thrive

When to create a Thrive supplement area: Begin your Thrive after bucks have hardened their antlers and cooler fall weather arrives. In most areas, this generally occurs in September or October.

Continue feeding Thrive through fall and winter until it's time to transition back to 30-06 or 30-06 Plus Protein as spring green-up occurs.

Can I use Thrive year round? Thrive has critical nutrients deer can use all year. Even so, it's designed for fall and winter, and 30-06 and 30-06 Plus Protein are designed for spring and summer. (Remember what I said earlier about athletes and targeted nutritional programs.)

How can Thrive be used? Thrive is designed for use in ground sites, trough feeders and gravity feeders, and it can be mixed with corn at a rate of 10 to 20 pounds of 30-06 Thrive to 100 pounds of corn.

Where should I create a Thrive supplement site? As with other 30-06 supplements, site selection is extremely important with Thrive. Deer prefer to be in cover, so select a site in a wooded area where deer feel safe, preferably just off a well-used trail, crossing, funnel or natural feeding area.

How much Thrive should I use in a site? When creating a supplement area, use about 10 to 20 pounds of Thrive per site. Well-supplied areas encourage continued use by deer.

How many Thrive supplement sites are needed? Research indicates you should provide a supplement site for every 40 to 100 acres of available land, depending on the size of your herd and habitat. When you have observed the usage of your sites, you can better determine the exact number of total sites needed.

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

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Caution: Thrive is so attractive to deer some states consider it bait. Check your local game laws before using or hunting over a Thrive site.

Research = Results

The Whitetail Institute Certified Research Program

An Integral part of "Research Equals Results"

By Jon Cooner

RESearch EQUALS RESULTS: That's been the Whitetail Institute's motto for decades. The reason is simple: Scientific research, development and testing are the governing principles of Whitetail Institute product development, and they're why Whitetail Institute products continue to lead the industry in performance. Testing by the Whitetail Institute's Certified Research Team is just one aspect of that process — but it's a vital one.

While looking back through old issues of *Whitetail News* recently, I noticed two things. First, I noticed many articles generally discussed the Whitetail Institute's product development process. I also noticed, though, that although some aspects of that process, such as plant breeding and forage analysis, had been covered in some detail, the Whitetail Institute's Certified Research Program had only been mentioned. I thought that was a disservice. Although only a few of the Whitetail Institute's product development stages involve Whitetail Institute Certified Research, it's just as important to Whitetail Institute product performance as any other stage.

The Scientific Method

The information provided by the certified research stations is an exceptionally important part of ensuring that Whitetail Institute products perform at the highest levels in almost every part of North America. Explaining how important their role is requires an understanding of the scientific method.

Long recognized by scientists as the exclusive process for reaching reliable conclusions, the scientific method is a continuous process that consists of a series of steps beginning with identifying a question to be answered or achievable goals. In the case of forage product development, the ultimate goal is creating the best-performing forage product for a specific set of circumstances, including, for example, soil type and equipment limitations.

Candidate Forages

The next step is gathering information relevant to the question or goal. At this stage, the Whitetail Institute identifies existing plant varieties that best exhibit specific traits. The most important of these is attractiveness to whitetails. Other traits the Whitetail Institute seeks include nutritional content, tolerance of adverse





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weather conditions and many others. Close interaction with top agronomists, seed growers and research universities has allowed the Whitetail Institute to effectively develop each of these traits. The Whitetail Institute draws from an extremely deep pool of information, and the sources from which it obtains seed are equally broad, reaching beyond North America.

The Whitetail Institute refers to plant varieties initially chosen for research and development as candidate forages. When the Whitetail Institute identifies plant varieties that are good enough to become candidate forages, it could stop there. The company could bag the seed and put it on store shelves. Although that would be the easiest and least costly option for Whitetail Institute, that's not what happens — not even close. That fact speaks volumes when you understand how the scientific method works.

From Candidates to Products



During the early stages of product development, the Whitetail Institute sometimes gathers existing performance information about potential forage components from external sources. Such externally gathered information is usually generally correct, but the scientific method requires much more, especially because the Whitetail Institute's goal is developing forage products that push the upper limits of performance in food plots for deer. Specifically, according to the scientific method, the Whitetail Institute's candidate forages aren't a definite conclusion. They're what's referred to in scientific-method terminology as a hypothesis — a conclusion that only has a good probability of being accurate. Certainty, though, requires verification through dependable testing. That's why Whitetail Institute subjects its candidate forages to an extensive process that involves repeated cycles of testing and data analysis to determine which (if any) meet the Whitetail Institute's stringent product-performance standards. Only the few that survive that stage are accepted for direct inclusion in a Whitetail Institute food plot product or as parent stock for breeding new plant varieties for food plots.

Whitetail Institute testing is performed first at the Whitetail Insti-

tute's Alabama headquarters and its research areas elsewhere in the United States. To make sure the forage will perform at high levels, blind testing is also conducted elsewhere across North America to determine how well candidate forages, alone and in various blend ratios with other forages, perform in a variety of climates. And that's where the Whitetail Institute's Certified Research Program gets involved.

Whitetail Institute Certified Research Program: A Brief Description

The Certified Research Program consists of satellite research stations across North America. These stations are not Whitetail Institute entities. Rather, they are privately owned locations where deer managers and long-time Whitetail Institute customers conduct blind tests of forages, individually and in blends, as well as nutritional supplements and deer attractants for Whitetail Institute. Tests are sent to certified research stations at least once a year and usually several times. Each forage test is separately packaged and identified with a unique code so researchers don't know exactly the components or composition of the test seed. Planting or site instructions are also provided with each test, along with one or more questionnaires researchers use to log specific data and otherwise provide information to Whitetail Institute on a wide range of topics, which the Whitetail Institute then incorporates with its test data in subsequent stages of product development.

Profile of a Whitetail Institute Certified Researcher

Whitetail Institute certified researchers are real hunters who use and test Whitetail Institute products in the real world. They tend to stay with the program for many years. There's little turnover, and the waiting list is long. One reason is the extreme care with which Whitetail Institute selects its certified researchers. Obviously, we must be sure that anyone asked to be a certified researcher will provide precise, comprehensive data to us, and on a timely basis. Another reason that might not be so obvious is that the Whitetail Institute works so closely with its certified researchers during product development that they often have access to insider information that our competitors would kill to have. For anyone to become a Whitetail Institute certified researcher, the Whitetail Institute must know them so well there is no question that their work and observations with test products are done on a completely confidential basis, and that the feedback they provide is accurate and honest.

In some ways, our certified researchers are as diverse a group as you'll find. In other ways, they're exactly the same. Whitetail Institute certified researchers run the gamut in age and background. Some are in their 30s but others are in their 60s. Some own the property they use for testing, and others lease it. All, though, share a love of the outdoors, a sense of stewardship of the natural world and of whitetail deer, and are committed to providing the Whitetail Institute with accurate, comprehensive data and other feedback on tests.

But I really don't have to tell you that. Anyone who has tried Whitetail Institute products already knows they're the industry's top performers. As I hope I've shown, our certified researchers are a big part of the reason why that's the case. 🦌



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DEER CAMP

I f the blaze in your orange has bleached to a pleasing shade of pumpkin, you probably know what I mean. Sure, whitetails are the creatures that drive us out there, but somewhere along the way, deer — especially the serious about killing one — kind of took a back seat to something bigger: the people we hunt with.

I've been chasing whitetails for more than 40 years, and I'll be honest: Although I treasure and respect deer more than ever, I've forgotten many of the whitetails I've encountered, and even a couple of bucks I've shot. But the folks I've hunted with? I can tell you just about everything funny, heartwarming or tragic thing that occurred to them as they chased deer together.

Of course, most of the time we spend with these men is at a special place called deer camp. It's where we gather on an (hopefully) annual basis to reconnect with friends who share the common bond of hunting. I've been lucky to be a part of several great deer camps, although the overriding purpose is, of course, to put bucks on the meat-pole, the best camps are the ones where the friendships are more important than the biggest buck running.

What follows, then, is a look at some of the best deer camps



students, a young urban professional or two and even a neighbor child who was too young to hunt. For some reason, the group clicked marvelously, for no other reason than our mutual love of bowhunting for whitetails.

On the eve of the opener, we shot our bows (sometimes competitively), readied gear and ate a bunch of food. Typical camp stuff, except while most of us gabbed and caught up, one of my best buddies was busy prepping a prank. Dave was the shop teacher at the rural school where we taught. An excellent and highly respected teacher, Dave was an incurable prankster. He was as good at giggling people as he was teaching them woodworking and electricity.

Perhaps his master stroke was the year he snuck out on the eve of the opener, grabbed a 3-D buck target and ran out to the woods in the dark. Dave had helped our friend Pat prep a stand that afternoon, and Pat was eager to sit at the hotspot the next morning. Dave tucked the highly realistic target expertly among some brush and saplings, obscuring it just enough so any tell-tale signs of a target were hidden, but the key ingredients — the buck's towering rack and just enough of the vitals — were exposed.

To his everlasting credit, Pat told all when he returned to camp for lunch on Saturday: How he'd climbed into the stand in the dark, started scanning the woods as daylight broke, his shock and amazement to see an incredible buck standing stock-still within easy bow range, and the numbing case of buck fever that followed. Pat was so nervous that he whiffed his shot, and he was borderline incredulous when the buck not only didn't run but didn't move as the arrow sailed over its back. Carefully and slowly, Pat plucked a second arrow from his quiver, drew and — even more nervous this time — air-balled the follow-up. When the buck still didn't bolt, alarm bells finally rang

tempted to not say a word, to pretend I'd never even seen that thing. But the prank was so good, I had to give Dave the props he deserved."

North Woods Solitude

One of the coolest things about deer camps is their ability to transport us to another world; one vastly different from our day-to-day routine. Perhaps no camp accomplishes this better for me than my friend Tom's cabin in northern Wisconsin. Tom is a logger, so he almost lives in the woods that we hunt while at his camp. So although the little cabin in the big woods is probably no break in Tom's routine, for me, it's high adventure.

For starters, we're talking vast, unbroken stretches of timber. The nearest farm ground lies 30-some miles from Tom's cabin. Tom and his brother, Jeff, have a couple of food plots near the cabin, but we've never hunted them. Instead, we take long scouting walks that take us through acres of public forest, searching out acorn-bearing oaks and clear-cut edges that attract whitetails. Rub-lines and scrapes help us fine-tune stand sites. We carry stands and climbing sticks on our backs, set up on the hottest sign and settle in to wait. Deer densities are low, so just seeing a buck is a triumph, and we're just as likely to spot a black bear foraging for acorns as we are a whitetail.

Some of my friends wonder why I love hunting there so much when I have more, and even bigger, bucks running outside my back door. I try to explain that Tom's North Woods camp takes me to a different place than what I enjoy at home. The perfect case in point occurred just two falls ago, when Tom arrowed a great 12-point buck. We'd found an oak dropping acorns and deciphered a fresh rub line, and Tom had set the stand. The buck slipped in with 30 minutes of shoot-



blood trail.

First blood was easy to find, and the buck appeared to be in major trouble in a hurry. But then the unexpected happened. The buck had made a small circle, bedded briefly in a blowdown and then sprinted off, running into brush and saplings on the way. The panicked run initially had us worried we'd bumped the deer, and when the blood dissipated, we decided to head to the cabin and take up the trail at first light.

And that's when the wonders of Tom's camp kicked in. We stayed up late. Tom reviewing the buck's instant reaction to the hit. Then we agreed that wolves had jumped the buck from its bed. There miles from civilization, we acknowledged that we were just two more predators interested in running down a deer. We tracked the buck for much of the next morning with no luck. But that afternoon Tom took up a position on a high point near the spot we'd found last blood on his trophy. After some patient observation, he noted where eagles lit in trees that surrounded a small clearing. Moving toward that spot, we found the buck's head and carcass, the latter picked clean from the scavenging of bears and wolves. Tom tagged the buck's head and dragged it two miles out of the woods. The 150-inch buck was a whopper for the big woods, the equivalent of a Booner anywhere else.

Southern Hospitality

I don't enjoy the privilege every year, but for several deer seasons, I've been fortunate to be invited to an Alabama camp late January. As a Midwestern boy, the most obvious reason I love this deer camp is simple: At home, the mercury flirts with the single digits, and snow often piles against the foundations of my home. But at the 'Bama camp, I can hunt in my shirt sleeves, the temps far above freezing in the evening. Even cooler, the rut is just ramping up in latter January there, but the deer back home are in survival mode.

I suppose I should confess that the camp is run by Steve and Wilson Scott, owners of the Whitetail Institute, which owns and publishes this magazine (and, in my opinion, makes some of the best food plot

seed on the planet). And I should also note that these men not only run a great deer camp, I count them as great friends. Although the composition of the camp is somewhat different each year I've attended, the atmosphere is always warm, welcoming and easy-going.

To me, that is one of the definitions of a great deer camp. Rather than feeling like you have to be or act a certain way to fit in, you feel immediately welcome and a part of things. I know there are deer camps where you have to go through some initiation to prove your worth, but I have no interest in such places. To me, deer hunting is an eclectic, inclusive sport where all are welcome, and the Scott camp is just such a place — a place where even a Northern boy can feel not only comfortable but right at home.

A final confession regarding the Scott camp: I have only killed one buck there, after multiple visits. One of this was just after hunting; picking the wrong stand the right night, vice versa. And for two I passed that, in retrospect, I probably shouldn't have. The year I killed my buck, I actually whiffed a 75-yard shot (with a rifle, no less) in the morning. The airball was so dramatic that it had Steve Scott questioning the zero on the rifle I'd borrowed for the hunt. Though I told him I'd simply not taken the time to settle in on the buck and the fault was mine, not the rifle's, he took the gun to the shooting range and shot it anyway. Steve came back shaking his head. The gun was dead-nuts on and proved that, hey, even a guy who's been hunting for many years can screw up a gimme shot. But here's the thing: When I dropped the hammer on a great 8-point that evening, no one was happier for me than Steve, and I had to endure only minimal teasing.

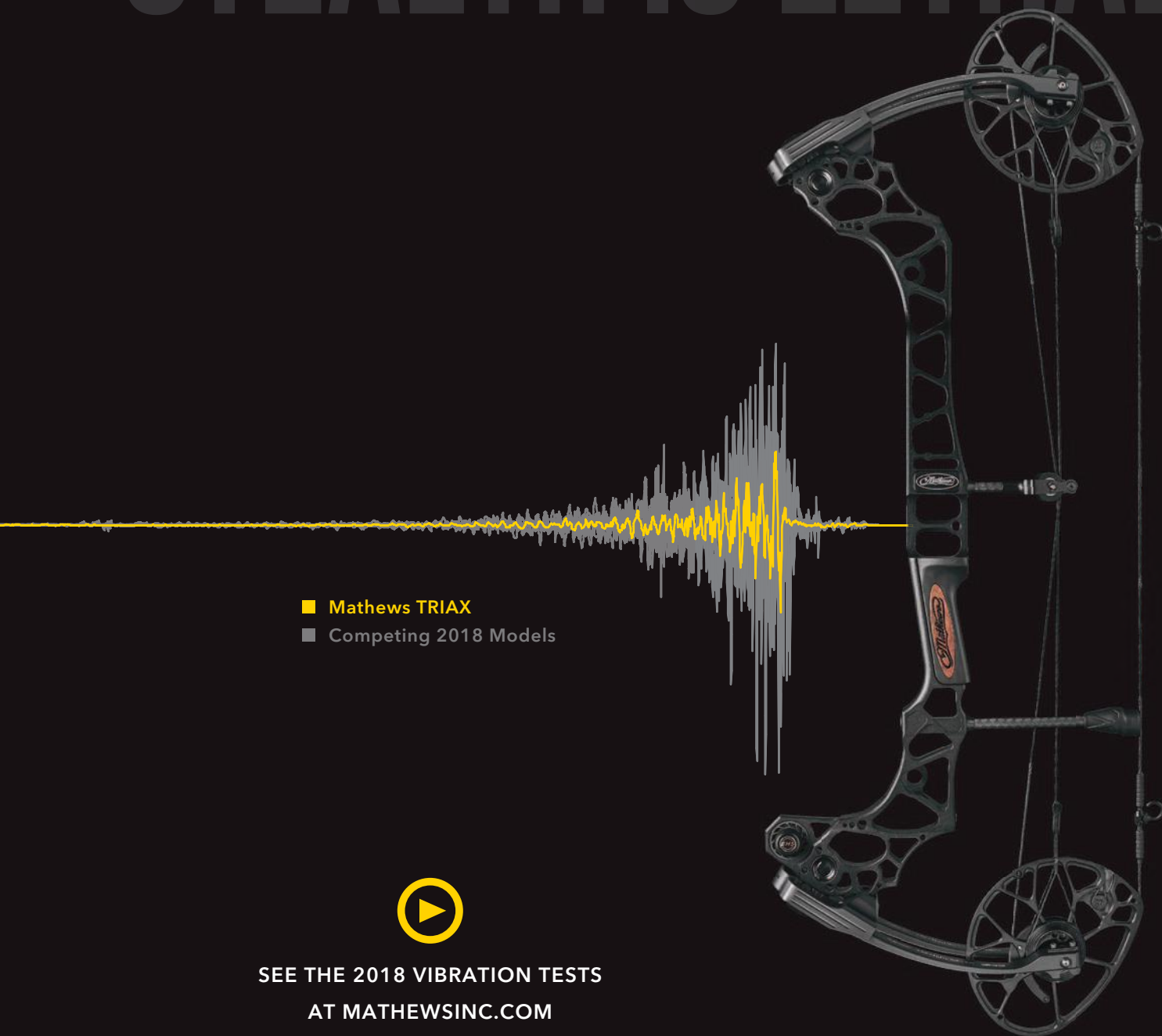
Conclusion

There have, of course, been other camps that have played a big part of my life as a deer hunter; cheap hotels in southern Iowa, tents in the North Dakota badlands and even my grandparent's house in central Wisconsin. Each has been a launching point for adventure, all memorable for different reasons, every one an unforgettable part of my hunting past. And the only thing better than sifting through memories of them is anticipating the deer camps in my future. 🍷



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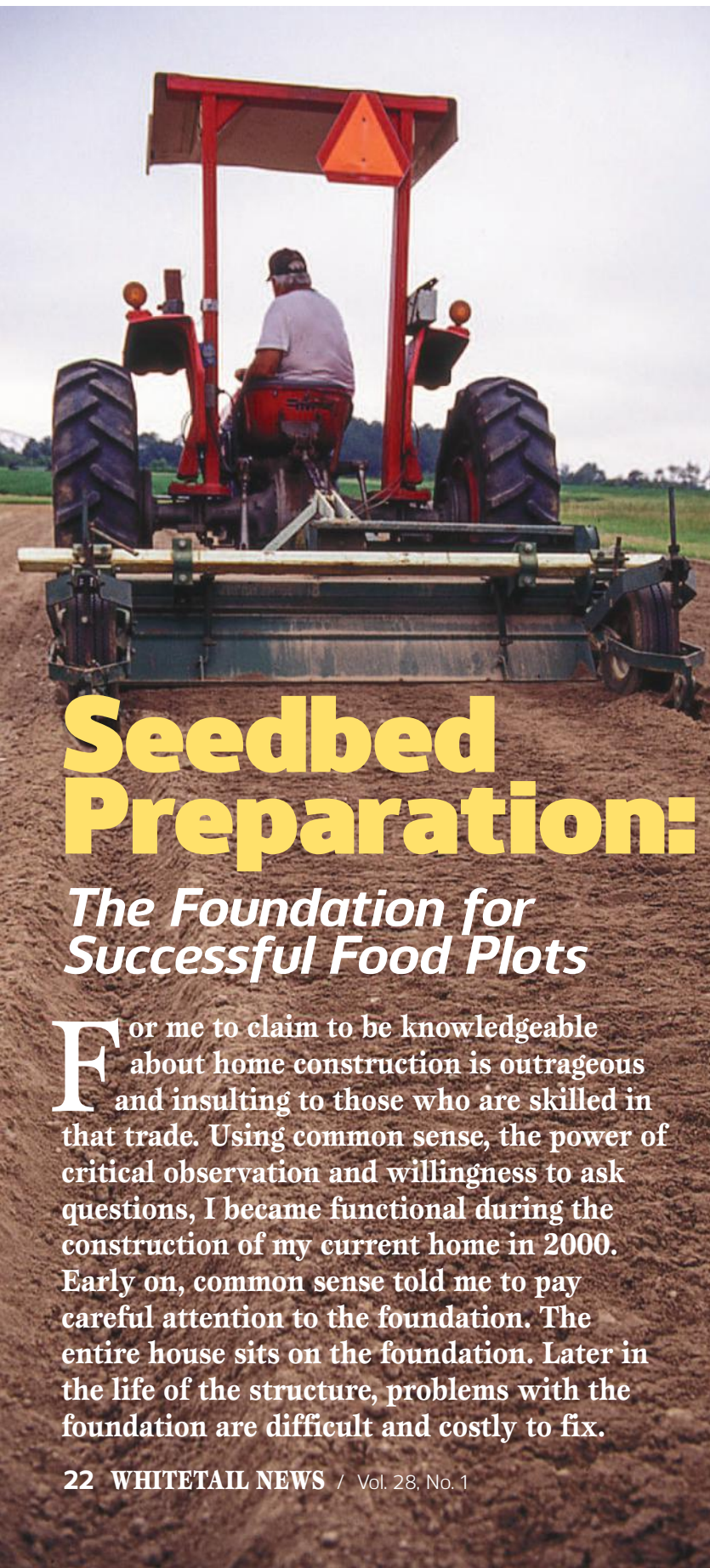
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The WEED DOCTOR

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



Seedbed Preparation:

The Foundation for Successful Food Plots

For me to claim to be knowledgeable about home construction is outrageous and insulting to those who are skilled in that trade. Using common sense, the power of critical observation and willingness to ask questions, I became functional during the construction of my current home in 2000. Early on, common sense told me to pay careful attention to the foundation. The entire house sits on the foundation. Later in the life of the structure, problems with the foundation are difficult and costly to fix.

Seedbed quality is the foundation of a food plot. A food plot's success is no better than the quality of the seedbed at the time when forages are seeded. The trouble with describing the ideal seedbed is that the entire set of criteria is 100 percent subjective. Trying to pin down a farmer or technical specialist on describing an ideal seedbed results in a series of vague terms such as "loose," "lightly packed," "well prepared" and others. When I was a raw student, trying to make sense of those ambiguous terms was annoying. Roles are now reversed, and I cannot completely avoid that bad habit when describing seedbed preparation, so bear with me.

For food plots that will be planted with small seeds, an ideal seedbed needs to be firm, with just enough loose soil on the surface for shallow coverage of small forage seeds. A firm seedbed lessens the chance of small seed being placed too deep and improves soil-seed contact. A cultipacker, the ideal implement to create a firm seedbed for small-seed forages, uses the weight of ribbed cast-iron press wheels to gently firm the seedbed and provide optimum soil-seed contact. Note: (use a cultipacker before and after spreading small seeds)

Avoid the Extremes

By extremes, I am referring to seedbed preparation when soils are obviously too dry or wet. During the extreme of a prolonged drought, seedbed tillage will further deplete soil moisture, and forage seeds cannot germinate in a dry soil. Additionally, if soils at the food plot site are coarse textured (sandy), seedbed tillage during a prolonged drought will create a fluffy seedbed that is prone to having tiny forage seed sink too deep in the soil to emerge. If deeply placed forage seedlings emerge, they are weakened from depletion of carbohydrate reserves and might not survive. Planting food plot forages too deep is a common problem.

Have you watched a road construction project? Two of the basic construction practices are a heavily watered roadbed followed by repeated harrowing. This compresses the soil structure in the roadbed, making a compacted substrate. A similar condition can happen in food plots. If food plot seedbeds are tilled when wet, the result is a seedbed that is heavily compacted to the extent that seedling forages struggle to emerge after germination. I learned this the hard way early in my professional career, when I had more zeal than sense. Planting season is hectic, and compressed timelines during the planting season caused me to insist that seedbed preparation be finished and planted to peanuts between rain showers. After a day of sunshine, I created a brickyard out of a peanut field. Youth clouded my judgment, and the crop was stressed from soil compaction the entire season. If I had waited for the soil to slowly dry a bit before final tillage, there would have been no problems. The point is to be patient. Avoid seedbed tillage during periods of extremes, whether extremely dry or wet.

Importance of a Weed-Free Seedbed

It is imperative that seedbeds be completely weed-free at the time of planting. Otherwise, emerged weeds on the seedbed have a multi-week head start on the crop. I am fortunate to live and work in the

middle of large-scale commercial agriculture in rural southern Georgia. In our region, Palmer amaranth (a tall pigweed species) is a common and troublesome weed of all crops. In late May, while driving the back roads to and from work, I often notice young peanuts and cotton (about two weeks old) with scattered infestations of Palmer amaranth that are more than 12 inches tall. Palmer amaranth grows tall and fast, but not as fast as that image suggests.

In this case, the tall Palmer amaranth are actually much older than the newly seeded crops. Logistics are one of the modern farmer's biggest challenges and result in shortcuts in seedbed preparation during the rush of planting season. Sloppy or abbreviated seedbed preparation (that is, final tillage) did not kill previously emerged weeds. Palmer amaranth plants were hardly slowed. Basically, Palmer amaranth had at least a two-week head start on peanuts and cotton. Those large weeds are difficult to control with herbicides and cause farmers fits the remainder of the year. The same will happen in food plots if slipshod tillage practices are used for seedbed preparation. When preparing seedbeds for food plots, till with gusto to ensure that no weeds are present. When it comes to weeds on the final seedbed, zero tolerance is a worthwhile goal.

Be Proactive: Use Stale Seedbed Weed Control

Like most agricultural terms, stale seedbed has many definitions depending on your location and cropping system. For the context of food plots, my definition is a seedbed formed several weeks or if possible, even months before planting the forage. During this time, food plots are regularly tilled at frequent intervals — ideally bi-weekly. Sometimes, glyphosate can be substituted to control emerged weeds on the stale seedbed, and this is particularly useful for perennial weed control. Stale seedbed weed control is a proven weed-control practice in many small-acreage specialty crops that have few herbicides or for particularly troublesome weeds in any crop.

For most weed infestations, I prefer stale seedbed tillage rather than glyphosate to control weeds before planting. My preference is based on tillage simultaneously destroying seedling weeds and stimulating germination of additional weed seeds. The next stale seedbed tillage two weeks later repeats the process. Repeated tillage before seeding the food plot progressively reduces numbers of viable weed seeds in the upper layers of the soil, a process called exhaustive germination. The success of this weed-control strategy is based on a finite number of weed seeds in the soil. After the forage is seeded, the reduced baseline weed density eases future weed-control challenges in the food plot. Are your weed problems in the food plot eliminated? No. However, future weed problems will be lessened.

Repeated stale seedbed tillage also makes a finished seedbed conducive for small-seed forages (clover or alfalfa) to be established at optimum densities. As mentioned, one of the critical factors for forage seed germination and seedling growth is direct contact between the seed and soil. The repetitive nature of stale seedbed tillage breaks clods, fills voids in the soil profile and settles the seedbed, ensuring good soil-seed contact. Whether you seed forages by hand or use a grain drill, a well-prepared seedbed (sorry for the vague term) will go a long way toward successfully establishing a food plot.

The peanut and cotton farmers near my home with very young crops and large Palmer amaranth eventually hired laborers to hand-pull tall weeds mid-season, and that is common regionwide. That's an image I would have never expected to see in the United States. The cost of hand-weeding probably averages \$100 per acre. Multiply that by 500-acre fields and you are talking about a sizeable expense in crops that have razor-thin profit margins. Abbreviated seedbed preparation was a contributing factor and a costly mistake.

Reverting back to my home-construction analogy, the foundation was not well prepared in those large fields. Do not fall into that trap with food plots. Fastidious seedbed preparation is time well spent, and the benefits will be obvious. 🙏



Many times, food plots are in rough, unimproved areas and require extra efforts to prepare seedbeds suitable for forages. One of the critical objectives in seedbed preparation is complete destruction of existing weeds. In this example, the perennial grasses seen in this seedbed will survive and infest the future food plot. Additional seedbed tillage is needed.

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



Al Atkins – Ohio

We've been using Whitetail Institute food plot products for five years. The deer mow them down. The number of deer on our property has increased by leaps and bounds. The increase in buck quality has been noted, and the deer love the plots.

Standfast Outdoor Ministry Team member Steve Ellis killed this 163-2/8-inch 12-point with his bow. The buck was killed headed back to a bedding area from a food plot with Ambush and BowStand. Thank you, Whitetail Institute.

Daren Overmohle – Iowa

We own 80 acres in Iowa that is in about 90 percent CRP grass and 10 percent timber. We left out 2 acres for food plots, and after years of observing, it was clear that having the best food plots in the area led to seeing the most wildlife possible. We replanted our old 3/4-acre generic clover plot with Edge four years ago. The Edge plot has been phenomenal at attracting deer and turkeys all year-round. We first saw this big guy on the Edge two years ago. We found his sheds nearby, so we knew he was living near the plot. This past season, we saw him with a spotting scope from 250 yards away on Nov. 9 in the Edge plot. On Nov. 10 my brother Dan moved in for the hunt of his life. Dan shot this buck with his bow at 40 yards, and the buck died on the Edge plot. Thanks, Whitetail Institute!



Greg Garvens – Wisconsin

I hunt in southern Wisconsin where crop fields are plentiful. I was repeatedly told that I was wasting time planting food plots because they were unnecessary. I stayed true to my instincts and established the food plots two years ago, using Imperial Whitetail Clover. That first spring, I was shed hunting and walked up on my 1-acre clover plot, to



discover 13 deer grazing in the mid-morning light. That was my first sign that Imperial Whitetail Clover was magic! For the remainder of that year, I saw multitudes of deer, but the shooters evaded me.

Last year, I saw a lot of pictures of big bucks in velvet all summer. In late October, I was pleasantly surprised by a typical 9-point 164-inch gross 6-year-old buck that had moved into the area. I believe that it was all due to having the right food on my hunting ground. If you want to attract the biggest deer in the area, I highly suggest planting Imperial Whitetail Clover.



Andrew Findlay – Minnesota

I shot my best buck ever with a bow on the morning of Nov. 5 on a ridge just above a first-year creek bottom Imperial Whitetail Clover plot. I had barely gotten into my stand when I heard him coming through the woods. I quickly pulled my bow up, and before I knew it, he was directly below me but I still didn't have enough light to shoot. He sensed something wasn't right and started to back off then circled me. I had a lane cleared almost directly downwind, and as he got to it, I came to full draw. He stepped in just far enough for me to squeeze an arrow through, and I knew he would wind me very shortly, so I took the shot. He took off and dropped right into the bottom and piled up on the edge of the clover plot. He has a broken tine but still scored in the mid-140s with a 21-1/2-inch inside spread.

This is our first year putting in Whitetail Institute products, and we couldn't be happier. The clover has performed great in the damp partial-sun creek bottom. We fertilized and mowed as recommended, and it's handling intense grazing this fall better than expected. It has pulled and held more does on our property, and I don't think it's a coincidence we have had our most successful year harvesting mature bucks ever. Four mature bucks taken in the last week. All within sight of our clover. My buck is in Photo 1, and I've also enclosed photos of two of the other bucks we took this year. Thanks, Whitetail Institute, for a great product!



Brian Army – Michigan

I have been using Whitetail Institute products for 15 to 20 years now. I use No-Plow, Imperial Whitetail Clover and Extreme. I have shot many deer. However, I have always dreamed of shooting a large buck one day. Well, this year, I was determined to shoot a really respectable buck! I decided to try and plant a small plot in a new spot this year where we had seen a very large buck the year before. I limed the soil really well and tried to get my pH as good as I could, and I planted No-Plow.

I was getting out of my stand the week before gun season and was driving out, and out popped this huge buck from the woods in front of my vehicle! The buck was the biggest buck I had ever seen in my life! The next day, I got out early, and as I was sitting there, I hear something. Then I saw him — the huge buck. My father and I had named him Big Boy. Big Boy had his hands full because he was chasing off two other bucks from a hot doe. After taking care of business, Big Boy and the doe came toward my stand. I came to full draw as the doe came running by with the buck in tow. I tried stopping him, but he would not stop! I bleated and bleated, but he would not stop. A few minutes later, I had another chance, but again, he would not stop. Then they both went off into the woods! I was heartbroken!

I was unable to hunt the first part of gun season, but I was finally able to go the Sunday after Thanksgiving. I got out there bright and early that morning, and it seemed everything was going wrong! I had dropped my orange hat and my gloves and flashlight out of the tree and had to crawl down and back up the tree a couple of times. Man was I frustrated! Finally, I got settled in and hooked up and noticed a very large-bodied deer coming down the tree line along the field edge about 150 yards away from me. I watched the deer for a while and noticed that he was a very good mature buck. The deer kept going away from me. I decided that I would try and grunt a couple of times and see what happened. I grunted two times, and he stopped and looked my way. He finally turned and started to come across the field and angling toward me! He came, and I saw him start to turn away again. I ranged him, and he was 113 yards away. It was now or never! So, saying a quick prayer, I put the cross-hairs on his chest and pulled the trigger! Down he went! I was ecstatic! Finally! My best buck ever! I did not realize what deer he was until I went over and saw him. It was Big Boy Buck, and what a monster! He scored 181-1/8 with a 24-inch inside spread and close to 8-inch bases! And he dressed 225 pounds. A true Michigan giant! I attribute a lot of my success to that impromptu No-Plow food plot that I had put in before the season began! I saw many more deer other than just Big Boy around this stand throughout the hunting season. I am definitely going to be putting more of these plots on my properties! Thanks, Whitetail Institute! 🍖



Send Us Your Photos! Do you have photos of a buck that qualifies for the Pope & Young, Boone and Crockett or your state record books that you grew or took with the help of Imperial products? Send it to us and you might find it in the Record Book Bucks section of the next issue of *Whitetail News*. Email your digital photos and a 3 to 4 paragraph story telling how you harvested the deer and the role our products played to info@whitetailinstitute.com or send them to: **Whitetail News, Attn: Record Book Bucks, 239 Whitetail Trail, Pintola, AL 36043**



Helpful Tips About Disks and Rototillers for Effective Seedbed Preparation

By Mark Trudeau

All Whitetail Institute perennial food plot products and most Whitetail Institute annuals should be planted in seedbeds prepared with tillage equipment. Most commonly, tillage during seedbed preparation is performed with either of two implements: a disk or a tiller. In this article, we'll explain what disks and tillers are and how they perform their functions. Later, we'll cover some advantages and disadvantages of each for folks who might be considering buying one. We'll also provide a few tips to help you use your disk or tiller effectively during seedbed preparation.

Preliminary Information

Disks, or disk harrows, and tillers, or rototillers, are implements used to work the soil. As such, they perform several tasks in seedbed preparation requiring tillage, such as incorporating lime and fertilizer into the soil, and loosening the soil so air and water can reach below the soil's surface. Most disks and tillers suitable for food plot use are towed behind a tractor or an ATV, although some small self-propelled tillers can do an adequate job of tillage in small seedbeds given enough time.

Disks: Disks use circular plates with smooth or notched edges (blades) to work the soil. The blades are cupped so they turn the soil over as they cut through it. The blades are mounted with even spacing

along one or more lateral shafts through the center of the plates (gangs), which in turn are mounted to the implement's main frame so the edges of the plates are presented to the soil.

Disks aren't powered implements. Instead, their blades are mounted



so they can turn freely, and the implement's weight lets them cut into the soil as the tractor or ATV pulls the disk along. All tractor disks and most of the heavier ATV disks adjust in the field for level, tilt and blade angle, allowing them to quickly configure to yield different results on the soil. Generally, the lighter an ATV disk is, the less adjustable it will be. The lightest ATV disks might feature only one gang that isn't adjustable.

Tillers: Unlike disks, tillers use rotating tines to work the soil. The tines are L-shaped and are mounted with even spacing along a lateral shaft, which is mounted to the implement's main frame.

Unlike the blades of a disk, a tiller's tines are powered so they rapidly chew the soil. Tractor tillers are powered by the tractor's PTO through a chain or gears mounted on one side of the tiller. Smaller ATV-suitable tillers usually have an engine mounted to the implement to drive the tines. Most tillers adjust in the field so they run level, and they have skid plates mounted to the outside of the frame preventing them from digging too deeply into the soil. How deeply the tiller reaches into the soil is set by adjusting the skid plates up or down.

Comparative Advantages

Tight spaces: One big benefit tillers have over disks occurs in sit-



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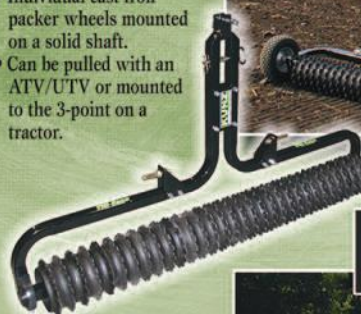
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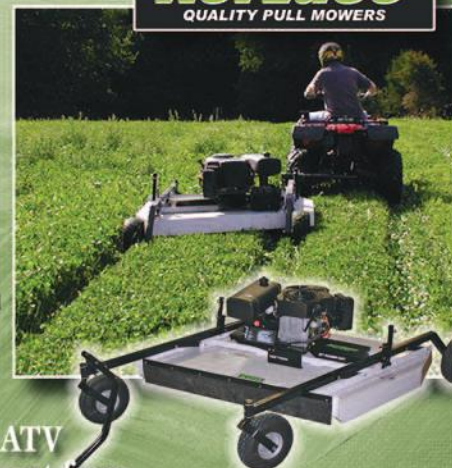
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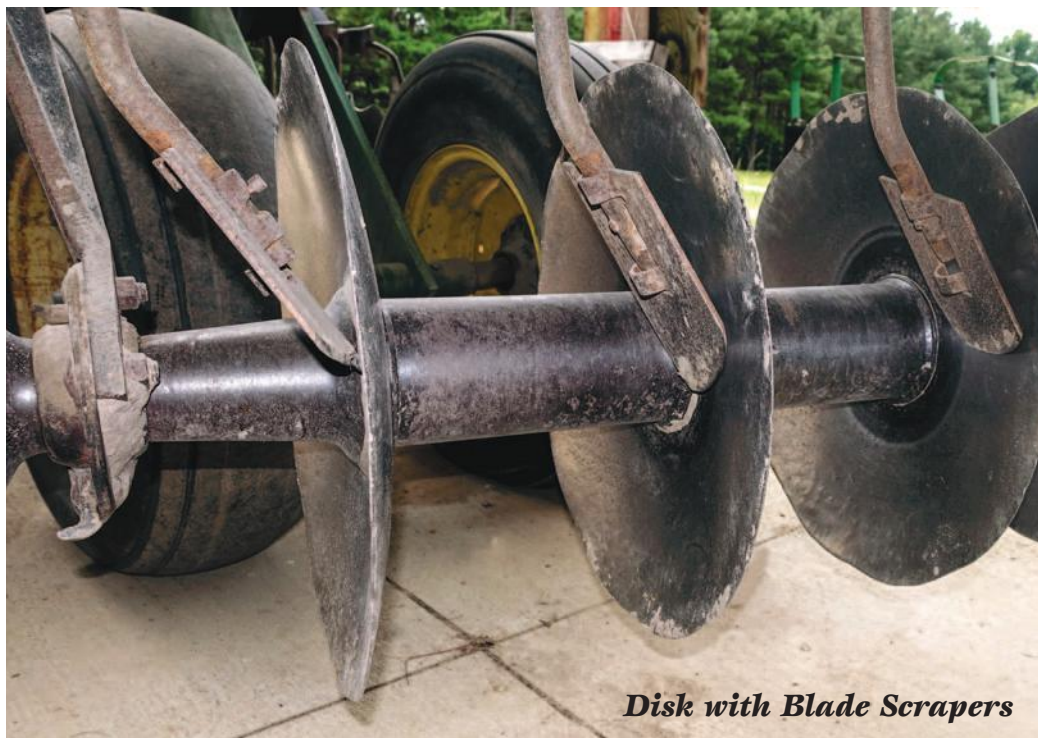
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Disk with Blade Scrapers

uations where space is tight. Because tractor tillers attach directly to the tractor, they maneuver easier than disks in tight spaces, giving them the advantage in smaller food plots. Also, unlike disks, which rely on the movement of the tractor or ATV to begin cutting the soil, a tiller's powered tines let it begin working the soil as soon as it is turned on. This can be a drawback. Running the tiller while stationary can leave the seedbed uneven. The tiller will throw the tilled soil completely out of the back of the tiller, leaving a hole under the tiller and a ridge behind it.

Cutting through foliage: Tillers should not be used in areas where vegetation is growing. You can understand why when you consider that tillers work the soil with rapidly rotating tines close to the surface of the soil. Standing vegetation and longer mower clippings left on the surface of the soil can keep a tiller's tines from penetrating the soil as well as they should and quickly bind them.

Disks are much better at cutting through standing vegetation. It's usually better to disk without mowing first, because mowed material lying flat on the ground can make it harder for the disk's blades to penetrate into the soil. If you mow before disk, be sure you mow high for the same reason.

Adjustability: Disks easily win here. As mentioned, most tillers have skid plates mounted to the outside of the frame to prevent them from going too deep. They can also be leveled by adjusting the top link. Tractor disks and most heavier ATV disks, though, adjust for implement level and tilt, blade angle and cutting depth.

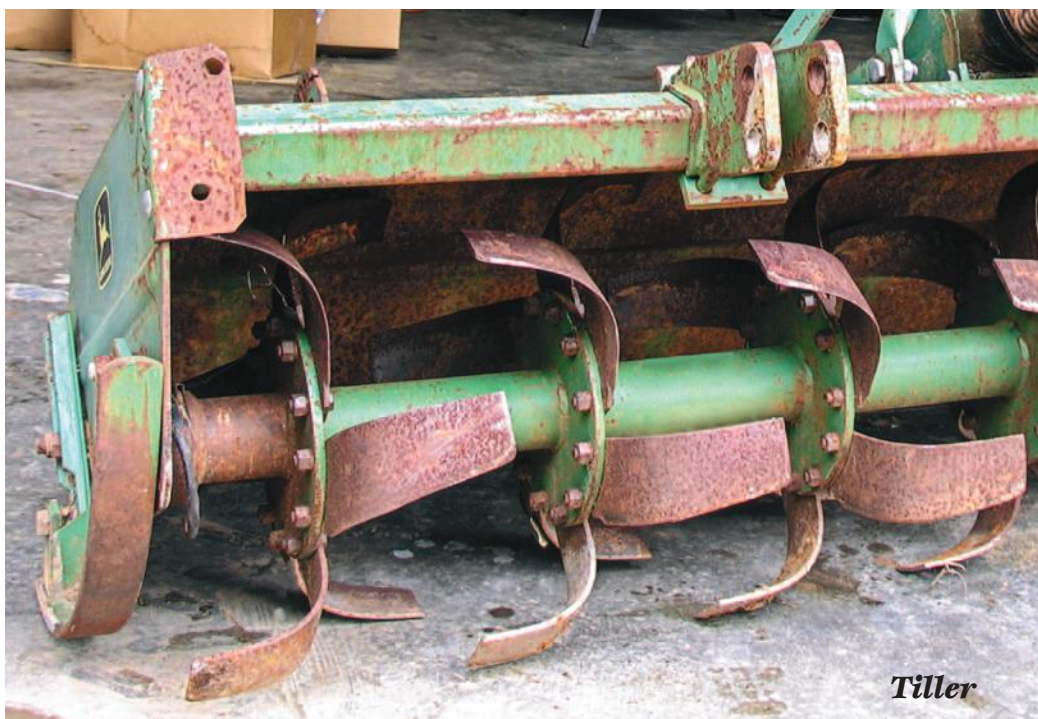
Performing the formidable task of initial

disking through existing vegetation in fallow soil, adjust the disk so it will cut aggressively. To do that, add blade angle, tilt the disk more toward the front (toward the tractor) and lower the blades into the soil as deeply as possible.

When doing your final-finish disking, level the disk, and take angle out of the disk to ensure the field stays level and you don't move too much soil toward the center, which can leave a ridge. I also chain a pole or section of heavy pipe that's as long as the disk is wide to the back of my disk for the final pass to help smooth and level the soil after the disk passes over it. Some folks use a board for this, but I get the best results from a heavy pole or section of pipe that's much heavier.

Soil moisture: Any time you're considering disking or tilling the soil, you should consider soil moisture. Your goal should be to end up with soil that holds some moisture — not wet and not dry, but with some moisture in it. A tiller or a disk will work well in most cases.

Generally, don't till on wet soils until they've had a chance to drain to the point they hold some moisture but aren't wet. There is one situation, though, where tillers do a better job than disks: when wet soil needs to be dried out. Tillers can help the soil shed excess water quicker because they shred the soil so thoroughly. A disk can be used for the same purpose, but the soil won't dry out as quickly. Also, it's strongly advised you make sure the disk is equipped with blade scrapers before you try to disk wet soil, especially if the soil has some clay in it. Most tractor disks come with blade scrapers, and they can be added as aftermarket accessories to disks that don't come with them.



Tiller

Blade scrapers scrape mud off a disk's blades as they exit the soil. If you try to disk wet soil without them, the disk's blades will likely clog with mud and become much less effective.

Rocky soil: Here, disks are preferred, because rocky ground poses a much greater risk of damaging a tiller.

Speed and time: You can cover more ground quicker with a disk than with a tiller. However, you'll likely need to make more passes with a disk.


Don't go too fast when using a tiller. For your first (or only) pass, don't go faster than about 1 to 2 mph, or the tiller will lose effectiveness on the soil. If you make a second pass, always go more slowly on the first pass than on the second. On the second pass, you can speed up to about 2 to 2.5 mph, but don't go faster than that — especially if you have a chain-driven tiller — or you'll likely break the chain.

Compaction: Keep in mind that a tiller vibrates as it runs along the ground. This, combined with the impact of the tines on the soil, can result in soil compaction below the reach of the tines. Accordingly, it can be a good idea every few years to deeply disk or even plow soil that's regularly tilled.

Important Tips

Finishing the seedbed after disking or tilling and before planting: Regardless of whether the soil has been disked or tilled, it must be smoothed and firmed before seeding small seeds such as clover, chicory and brassica. This might require more effort with tilled soil than with disked soil, because the rapid rotary action of tillers can fluff up the soil, leaving open the possibility that small seeds might

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You can cover more ground quicker with a disk than with a tiller. However, you'll likely need to make more passes with a disk.

end up too deep in the soil. Accordingly, tilled soil should be firmed with a cultipacker before seeding small seeds. If a cultipacker isn't available, an alternative is to use a drag-type implement.

Covering large seeds with a disk: Never cover small seeds, and never try to cover any seeds with a tiller. Large seeds should be covered by a thin layer of loose soil when planted. In my experience, the best implement to use for this purpose is a drag harrow with the teeth down because it presents a low risk of covering the seed too deeply.

If you don't have access to a drag harrow, large seeds can also be covered with a thin layer of loose soil by feathering with a disk. Never disk seed into the soil, or it likely won't come up after it germinates.

If you don't have a drag harrow and want to try to cover large seeds by feathering with a disk, adjust the disk so it is level to the surface of the soil. Then, adjust its height so it will barely disturb the surface of the soil. I use a tractor, and when I feather with my disk, I adjust the depth so the blades disturb just a little of my tractor's tire marks. Again, you have to be careful if you try this to make sure that the disk doesn't go deeper. For ex-

ample, consider that if you cross a low spot in the field, the disk can dig in too deeply as you're going down. With a drag harrow, this doesn't happen because the harrow follows the contour of the ground.

Turning and backing up: Disk blades and tillers can and should always be lifted from the soil whenever the tractor or ATV pulling it is turning or backing up. Failing to lift a disk when turning runs the risk of breaking blades (disks) and leaving unwanted ridges in the soil.

Tillers have hinged guards on the back to let debris exit the back of the tiller safely and help smooth the soil behind the tiller. The guard hinge only allows the guard to pivot to the rear, and if you try to back up without lifting the tiller off the soil, the guard or the hinge will likely be damaged.

Conclusion

If you already have a disk or a tiller, don't interpret this article as suggesting you need to buy the other. Either will do a superb job of the tillage required to prepare a seedbed well. Hopefully, this article has provided information you can use to get optimum results from either. 🌱



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Beets & Greens is a diverse blend of multiple brassica varieties, including Tall Tine Turnips, sugar beets and proprietary radishes and kale that establish and grow quickly, provide lots of succulent foliage above ground, and produce turnips, beets and radishes underground that will attract deer and provide them with various food options from fall through winter.

Forage Components and Performance

Beets & Greens is designed to maximize attraction in two ways: through the exceptional attractiveness of each of its components and by offering them in precise ratios so deer always have multiple food sources in the same plot from fall through winter. And like other Whitetail Institute seed blends, Beets & Greens includes seed varieties that are only available in Whitetail Institute products.

Tall Tine Turnip, the only turnip variety scientifically developed specifically for food plots for deer, is included in Beets & Greens and produces abundant foliage and large, sweet tubers. The foliage provides variety with other brassicas in Beets & Greens as they begin to attract deer during the early hunting season, and it becomes even sweeter with the first frosts of fall. The turnip tubers continue to at-



tract deer and provide them with critical nutrition during the cold winter months.

Sugar beets are included in Beets & Greens because they're very high in sugar — so high 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 the carbohydrates they need for energy from fall into the late season and beyond.

Beets & Greens also includes the Whitetail Institute's proprietary kale variety, WINA 210, which has proven through trials to be the most attractive kale variety the Whitetail Institute has ever tested. Unlike kale varieties with coarse leaves that grow in a tight head, WINA 210 kale grows large, tall, individual leaves that are highly palatable to deer.

The Whitetail Institute's proprietary radish, WINA 412, is also included in Beets & Greens to maximize the attraction of the stand throughout the season by adding variety to the forage and tuber offerings of the plot.

In addition to fulfilling their roles as forage components in Beets & Greens, WINA 412 Radish and Tall Tine Turnip can also help improve soil quality in two ways. First, the turnip and radish tubers drill down as they

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grow, helping to aerate heavier, compacted soils. WINA 412 Radish, for example, produces tubers that can push several feet even into compacted clay soils and grow as thick as soft-drink bottles, much larger than the small, round radishes we commonly see in grocery stores. Second, any turnip and radish tubers remaining the next spring also add organic matter to the soil as they break down.

Conclusion

Beets & Greens is designed to establish and grow quickly, providing deer with abundant, highly attractive foliage from early fall into the cold winter months. Its tubers start attracting deer in the late fall and continue to serve as a vital food source through winter. The Whitetail Institute even coats Beets & Greens seeds with Rainbond to help 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 1/2 acre, and 12-pound bags that will plant two acres. For more information, go to whitetailinstitute.com, or call (800) 688-3030. 🐾

The combination of foliage above ground and tubers underground from Beets & Greens helps ensure deer use the plot throughout both the early and late hunting seasons.



Is it Time to Replant Your Perennial Food Plot?

DON'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS

By Jon Cooner

Whitetail Institute perennial food plot products are designed to last for years without replanting. Even the best food plot stands can't last forever, though, and you'll eventually have to replant. In this article, we'll discuss the question of whether to replant a perennial food plot that has been growing for several years. Although there's no hard-and-fast rule to determine when it's time to do so, as every situation is unique, some general guidelines can help you make an educated decision.

Why Are You Considering Replanting?

We've heard the saying, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Applying that to perennial food plots, it means if you're satisfied with your perennial food plot, it's still growing vigorously, looks healthy and is still attracting and feeding plenty of deer, leave it in place. If you see visual cues you think might suggest the need to replant, do your homework first, because replanting might not be necessary.

Observation, Assumption, Verification and Conclusion

If you're considering replanting a perennial food plot, the idea likely arose because of something you observed — a visible cue the existing planting isn't growing as vigorously

or otherwise doesn't look healthy. In essence, the purpose of this article is to help folks avoid acting on assumptions and verify what's actually causing the symptoms before they conclude whether to replant.

Next, we'll look at a few examples. Each situation is different, but you should begin to see how the diagnostic process works and how to use accurate diagnoses in reaching a conclusion.

Assumption: Deer Don't Seem to be Browsing the Forage Very Heavily

Observation: That's because the most common reason for assuming deer aren't browsing a forage heavily is forage height. With Whitetail Institute perennials, most such cases are classic examples of the saying, "Appearances can be deceiving." In most such cases, deer are actually browsing the plot heavily.

Verifying the cause: Long-time readers of Whitetail News might have already guessed my first response to folks who suspect deer might not be heavily browsing a Whitetail Institute perennial: Do you have a browsing gauge in the plot? A browsing gauge is a small basket staked in the plot so deer can't feed on a small section of the planting. That lets you see how well the forage is actually growing and determine browsing pressure by comparing the height of the forage inside and outside the gauge. Unless you can watch the food plot 24 hours every day, a browsing gauge is the only effective way I know to determine how hard deer are browsing a forage.

If you have a browsing gauge in the plot and it confirms deer aren't browsing the plot heavily, the most likely reason is safety. Unless deer feel safe using a food plot, they will be much less likely to use it, especially during daylight. Consider whether you're leaving too much evidence of human presence in and around the plot, and include your entry and exit routes in the analysis. The less human presence deer can detect, the better. Another possible reason for low deer usage at a specific time of year is seasonal travel patterns. Again, though, the most likely reason for low deer usage is deer don't feel safe using the plot, and the reason is something you can identify fairly easily.

Conclusion: Look for possible reasons why deer might not feel safe using the plot, and address them before deciding you need to replant or potentially relocate the food plot.

Assumption: The Forage Isn't Growing Quickly Enough

Observation: This perception usually arises from an observation that the forage isn't as tall as you think it should be.

Verifying the cause: Several possible causes are fairly easy to accept or eliminate. One is rainfall. If your observation was made during extreme drought, it's likely forage growth has slowed because of that.

Another possible cause is browsing pressure. Again, this is usually fairly simple to accept or eliminate. Consider if you observed the symptom when other food sources are in low supply or low in quality, which is common during late winter and early spring, before green-up. Here, too, installing a browsing gauge in the plot lets you quickly and accurately determine whether the symptom is because of heavy browsing pressure.

If you eliminate low rainfall and extreme browsing pressure as causes, your next step should be to perform a laboratory soil test. That will determine whether soil pH is within neutral range (6.5 to 7.5), and whether fertilizer should be added, and if so, how much. As long-time readers of the *Whitetail News* know, making sure soil pH is within neutral range is the most important consideration you can control to assure food plot success. It can make the difference between the best food plot you can imagine and total failure. Only a soil test performed by a qualified soil testing laboratory can tell you precisely

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whether your food plot needs lime, fertilizer or both, and exactly how much.

Conclusion: Only one of the causes I've mentioned might lead you to decide to replant: low soil pH. Now, don't get me wrong — I'm not saying that if soil pH is slightly below optimum range that you must replant. I said that you might decide to replant. The decision will depend on variables unique to your situation.

Keep several critical items in mind when deciding whether to replant: The more acidic (soil pH is below neutral) soil pH is, the worse the effect on forage growth. Adding lime to the surface of a seedbed where a forage is still standing helps increase soil pH, but it will take much longer to do it, because lime won't quickly wash down into the upper levels of soil where the plant roots are. Weigh both factors when deciding. The decision will depend largely on how low soil pH is, and how much impact of low soil pH on forage growth you're willing to accept from that time until you're ready to till lime into the seedbed as part of seedbed preparation for a new planting.

Assumption: The Forage Plants are Diseased (Discolored Plants)

Observation: In all but the rarest cases, the few customers who report that a Whitetail Institute perennial is diseased have observed discoloration. Specifically, the plants have turned yellow. This almost always is a result of low soil pH or low fertility because of inadequate fertilization or excessive rainfall.

Verifying the Cause: The best way to verify the cause is to perform a laboratory soil test. That will tell you whether low soil pH or low fertility is the culprit.

Conclusion: Here, too, you might decide to replant if soil pH is low

for the reasons mentioned in the previous example. If the issue is low fertility and not low soil pH, fertilize the stand according to the soil test report.

Assumption: The Forage Plants are Diseased (General Stand Decline)

Observation: In this scenario, the planter followed the seedbed preparation, planting instructions and, every year thereafter, the forage-maintenance instructions for the perennial. As a result, he has enjoyed top performance from the stand for years. Even so, the stand is starting to look a little thin, or the individual plants look a little tired or frail. You might also have noticed grasses and other weeds, which didn't pose a huge problem in years past, have suddenly started to take over the plot. A main reason that can happen is the forage is no longer as thick and lush as it once was, leaving more room for weeds to gain a foothold.

Verifying the Cause: Start by examining the forage plants and the soil. Pull up some of the plants and look at the roots. The roots should be firm and healthy looking. If they are spindly or weak looking, there's a good chance the soil has a build-up of root-rot organisms, such as fungus, which can cause crop failure. Second, while you're digging in the soil, look for root-eating insects and their larvae, which can also build up through time. Either of these suggests it's time to rotate into another crop for at least one growing season to break the disease or insect cycle. A rotation should be with plant varieties that are different from those that have been in the plot.

Conclusion: Replant, but with a rotational crop for one growing season. Then, the soil will be freshened and ready for preparation to plant the perennial there again. The rotational crop should be a different type of forage than the existing perennial.

Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus is an excellent rotational crop for all Whitetail Institute perennials. Imperial Pure Attraction is, too, except for Double-Cross (Now Vision) stands that have had annual brassicas reintroduced into them every fall since planting. Be sure to follow the seedbed preparation and planting instructions for the rotational crop, including addressing soil pH and fertility.

Assumption: The Plot is Dead (No Signs of Active Growth)

Verifying the Cause: Although not what I'd call common, we sometimes hear from customers that their perennials, which had appeared healthy and lush, had sharply declined during a few weeks or months to the point the planting appeared dead. Most commonly, this occurs after a sustained period of unusually harsh weather — for example, in the Deep South after a period of excessive heat and extreme drought during late summer.

Because we're talking about an established perennial stand that was in robust condition before the extreme weather, the immediate step isn't verifying the cause but verifying the status of the forage plants as alive and dormant, or dead. If the perennial planted was

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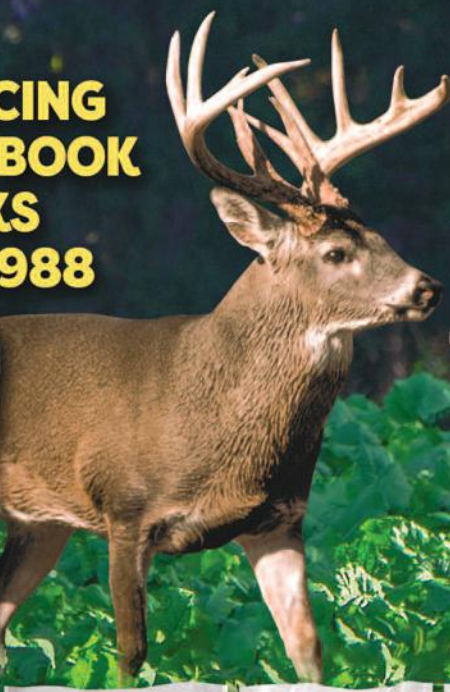
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Imperial Whitetail Clover or a Whitetail Institute food plot product containing Imperial Whitetail Clover (Alfa-Rack Plus, Fusion or Vision), there is a simple way to determine if the stand is still alive and just dormant by examining a clover stolon.

Stolons are essentially stems that run along the top of the ground and produce new clover plants. They're generally about the diameter

quickly and vigorously. I can't promise that happens in all cases because there are so many variables that affect the outcome, such as how well established and healthy the stand was, its age and the length and severity of the harsh weather.

Conclusion: Check the stolon or wait until climactic conditions improve to see if the planting regenerates. If it does, continue to follow the Whitetail Institute's forage maintenance instructions for the product. If it doesn't, work up the seedbed according to the Whitetail Institute's planting instructions for the product you'll be planting, and replant the plot.

Additional Options: If this happens in late summer, a couple of options can help you hedge your bets and ensure that you'll have an attractive, productive food plot whether the perennial regenerates or not. One option is to overseed the plot during your fall planting dates with No-Plow at a rate of about five to six pounds per acre. Another option, if you have access to a grain drill, is to drill Whitetail Oats Plus into the seedbed during your fall planting dates at a rate of no more than 30 pounds per acre. If the perennial survives, the No-Plow or Whitetail Oats Plus at the reduced rates won't crowd the perennial as it regenerates. If the perennial doesn't survive, the No-Plow or Whitetail Oats Plus will keep the plot attractive to deer during fall.

Conclusion

As you might have noticed, laboratory soil testing is repeatedly mentioned when verifying the cause of visible cues to perceived food plot problems. Laboratory soil testing is the best tool you have for ensuring your seedbed provides an optimum growing environment before you

plant. To learn more about Whitetail Institute's soil testing service and why it's tailor-made for food plotters, go to whitetailinstitute.com, and click on the "Soil Testing" link in the header of the home page.

The planting instructions the Whitetail Institute has prepared for each of its food plot products can be found on the back of the product bags and also at whitetailinstitute.com. When the time to replant eventually arrives, follow the instructions for the rotational crop just as carefully as you did for the perennial. For each Whitetail Institute perennial, the instructions also provide maintenance recommendations. By following them, you should enjoy years of top forage performance. 🍷



of a pencil or a little smaller. Scratch into the stolon with your fingernail. If the stolon is dry and brittle, the forage is likely dead, and it's time to replant. If you find the stolon where you scratched is still green and holds some moisture, the clover is still alive.

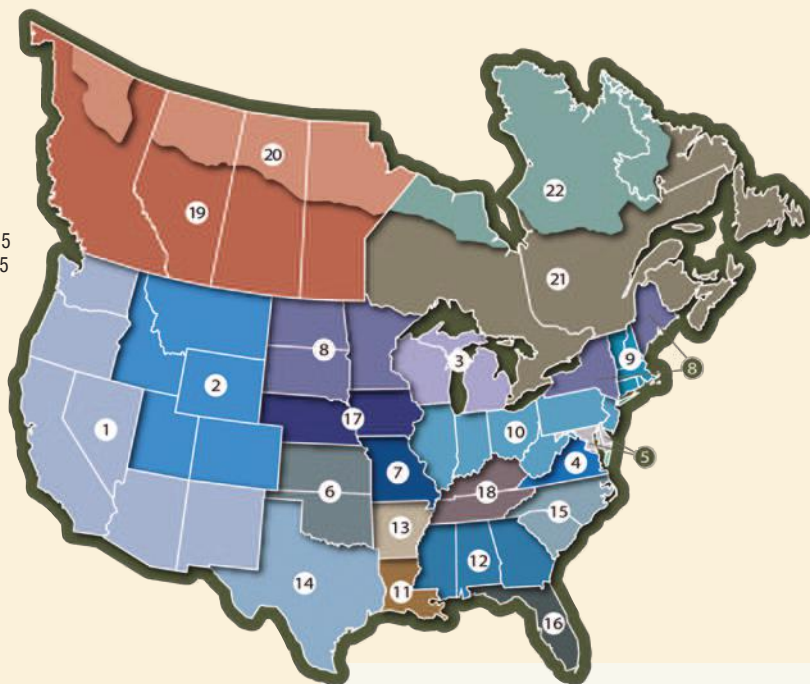
Keep in mind, though, if you find the forage is still alive and dormant, there's no way to determine how long it will stay that way. Remember, the forage is already under severe stress, and the chances the forage will be able to recover, put on new growth and begin to flourish again depends on how soon rain returns and weather improves.

Aside from the aforementioned method, the only other way to reliably determine if a forage is still alive is to wait until moisture and more moderate temperatures arrive and see what happens. In most cases, Whitetail Institute perennials will bounce back, and they do so

Food Plot Planting Dates...

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

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

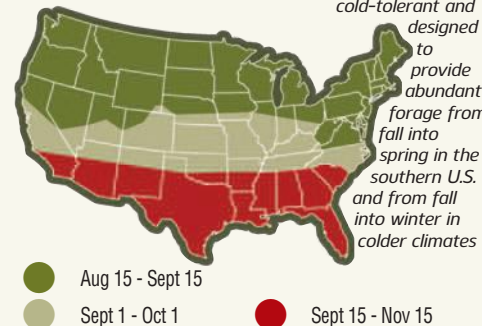


PLANTING DATES FOR VISION, PURE ATTRACTION, SECRET SPOT, WINTER PEAS, BOWSTAND AND AMBUSH

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

PLANTING DATES FOR WHITETAIL OATS PLUS

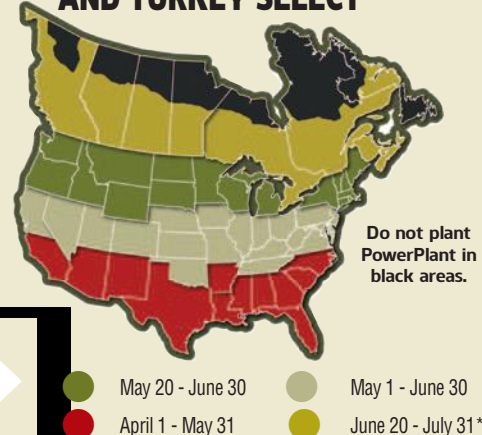
Use the map below as a guideline for when to plant Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus in your area. For best results, wait to plant until excessively hot, droughty summer weather has passed. Imperial Whitetail Oats Plus is highly cold-tolerant and designed to provide abundant forage from fall into spring in 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 South: Aug 1 - Oct 1 | 14 North: Sept 5 - Oct 30 Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15 South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | 17 July 15 - Sept 1 |
| 2 Call for planting dates | 8 July 5 - Aug 20 | 15 Coastal: Sept 1 - Oct 1 Piedmont: Aug 15 - Sept 20 Mountain Valleys: Aug 5 - Sept 15 | 18 Aug 1 - Sept 30 |
| 3 July 1 - Sept 1 | 9 July 1 - Aug 30 | 16 North: Sept 15 - Nov 15 Central: Sept 25 - Nov 15 South: Oct 5 - Nov 30 | 19 July 1 - Aug 15 |
| 4 Coastal: Aug 15 - Sept 30 Southern Piedmont: Aug 1 - Sept 15 Mountain Valleys: July 15 - Sept 15 | 10 July 15 - Sept 15 | | 20 June 15 - Aug 1 |
| 5 July 15 - Sept 15 | 11 Sept 15 - Nov 15 | | 21 July 15 - Aug 31 |
| 6 Aug 1 - Oct 1 | 12 North: Sept 5 - Nov 1 Central: Sept 15 - Nov 15 South: Sept 25 - Nov 15 | | 22 July 1 - Aug 15 |
| | 13 North: Aug 15 - Oct 1 South: Sept 5 - Oct 15 | | |

PLANTING DATES FOR IMPERIAL POWERPLANT AND TURKEY SELECT



*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.

Mentoring: *The Gift That Keeps on Giving*

Giving your time and energy to a newcomer is an investment into our shared hunting heritage.

By **R.G. Bernier**

Photos by the Author

“Why,” the Old Man asked me, “would you suppose that a man of my advanced years and general accomplishments would waste so much time trying to beat a little knowledge and a few good manners into the head of an unlicked cub? The reason is that all I got of me to pass on is you...”

— Robert Ruark, *The Old Man and The Boy*

“Do you see that in the leaf litter?” I asked the lad following me.

Chris looked a bit bemused as he scoured the ground for the correct response.

“What you’re viewing is evidence of abundant deer traffic, and they’re traveling in both directions,” I whispered as I continued to look around, gathering more information.

With more than a half century of white-tail insight, behaviorisms, experience and a lot of dead deer flesh under my belt, it’s easy to glance at sign and immediately recognize what I’m seeing. However, when a fledgling is under your wing, the view taken must be one from fresh eyes and energetic curiosity.

As Chris and I continued to move quietly through deer country, I stopped often to show him rubs, scrapes and scat, and to ask why he thought specific sign was located where it was. After all, recognizing what deer sign looks like and understanding the behavior behind it are two different courses of studies.

In the opening chapter of the *Old Man and The Boy*, Ruark wrote, “The thing I like best about the Old Man is that he’s willing to talk about what he knows, and he never talks down to a kid, which is me,



who wants to know things. When you are as old as the Old Man, you know a lot of things that you forgot you ever knew, because they’ve been a part of you so long.”

Any teachers worth their salt want to impart knowledge to those under their tutelage, but more important, they hope to see that insight blossom. After all, there’s no greater reward than to have the pupil excel.

Whether it’s time, energy or insight, this venture is an investment into someone’s

recreational hunting activity and, ultimately, our shared hunting heritage. So, the proverbial elephant in the room remains: Is the primary goal in any deer hunting endeavor — getting a deer — the most important aspect of the whole?

What’s Critical

No one is an island unto himself. All of us needed someone to educate and guide us. I can still remember following my dad’s steps through the deer woods, riveted on his every move, ever curious as I inundated him with countless questions. What Pop was doing during

my formative deer hunting years was laying a foundation upon which much could be built. He routinely took me hunting into an environment that held real deer, and gave me a real rifle along with real bullets. He treated me like a man (at least during hunting conditions) and made the experience fun. Don't tell my teachers, but he even allowed me to skip school numerous times during deer season to accompany him into the deer woods.

Short of sharing his love for the hunt and willingness to teach his son the way of the whitetail, I don't think my dad could have ever envisioned that his investment into my hunting would ultimately turn into his son's career.

Being a grandfather now, I've realized there's at least one benefit to age. It provides us with the ability to sense what is most important. You see, children don't want superficiality or even quick results. Even though most children want instant gratification, they ultimately want time — quality time. They want to feel as though they are and were part of the process.

When planting food plots, have the children spread the seed. Let them sit in the tractor seat with you. Show them how to do soil tests, and allow them to mow. Children don't know that work isn't fun, that sweat and toil is to be avoided, or that there is more to results than just pushing a button. If we make the experience enjoyable and include them throughout the process, they have a vested interest. When they begin to see the fruits of their labor, they'll likely become hunters themselves.

Recruitments

Much has changed since the days of old when our recruitments naturally filtered up from within the family. Now, with so many non-participants amongst us, a big percentage of the population of fledgling hunters consists of adults; men and women with little to no experience with deer and hunting in general.

Erich Long, of Drumming Log Wildlife Management said, "I'm afraid to tell you that our hunting heritage has an expiration date. With that said, I shouldn't have to tell you that taking a child hunting is so important. ... What is almost as important, if not more, is taking an adult out hunting. To show and teach them that (hunting) is more than just about killing.

"To preserve what we love and to ensure wildlife and its habitats are in good hands when we are gone, we must change the way we do things."

I've tutored many would-be deer slayers the past 30 years, young and old. But none are more profound than one of my hunting partners. A dozen or so years before, he purchased a set of my books, and after completing the narrative, announced he'd like to try the sport. The following is Ian's takeaway thus far into his 11-year deer hunting journey.

"I didn't grow up in a hunting family, and thus came late into hunting. Being incredibly fortunate to have someone like R.G. Bernier take me under his proverbial wing, which certainly helped break down the learning curve, was indeed huge. The following is some of what I've learned hunting with or as I like to call it, 'Bogging with Bernier.' Always wear waterproof boots. Why? Because deer reside around a variety of water sources. Travel the woods like a buck travels the woods, cross-cutting the wind. Always be ready to shoot. Always.

"The pain that is induced by not being ready to shoot a large buck when he unexpectedly appears lasts a long time. Realize that there



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aren't any mysterious formulas to locating big bucks. It takes being diligent, paying attention to details in searching out signs of a buck and looking for subtle clues that all too often are overlooked. If you don't find it after a thorough scrub, move on. I've learned to recognize the terrain that supports deer and geographic land features they are attracted to. I'm now optimistic until last light on the last day as a result of killing my first buck during that situation. Big bucks are quirky and can pop up anywhere. I learned the painful lesson once of letting down my guard when a very nice buck appeared that left me shaking my head for 11 months after I missed.

"Other lessons: If I can fool a doe, I can fool a buck. Learn from the does. Shoot a caliber of bullet heavy enough to fight through the brush. Nothing will penetrate it, but give yourself a chance. Old bucks are like old men. They won't give up their habits of comfort easily. Figure out his pattern, and he's all but mine. Finally, each deer has its own unique personality, so I never let conventional wisdom on deer behavior cloud my judgment on an individual buck and the sign he leaves in his wake."

Values

It's not ability but rather availability. Although a recognizable name from within the industry can gain immediate attraction, we must remember that those being mentored are and should be the priority. Yes, the chief end of any hunt is bringing a deer to bag, but that goal should never supersede the process of getting there. After all, the value of a dead pile of deer flesh, bone and antler can only be measured by the investment taken to secure the animal. My investment into Ian's deer hunting schooling was purely an act of giving back and the desire to see him succeed. Isn't that what life is really about?

For the past year (from when he was six weeks old until now), I have had the great opportunity to be the primary caregiver Monday through Friday to my grandson, Lucas. While his mom and dad make a living, I take care of his needs. This service is a result of helping our daughter and son-in-law, but most important, to make an early investment into the lad's life.

It's often been said, "More is caught than taught," and my hope to date is that as Lucas observes all we do together — and we've done a lot — that he will come to understand the ideals of how and why we do things. He's already accompanied me on numerous photo shoots that had wildlife as the focal point. While slung on my back in a pack, he's scouted the deer woods under a vibrant array of autumn colors, carried antlers, posed with his first buck and still had time to nap and take on nourishment. And yes, for those who are curious, I changed lots of his diapers — lots.

But best, we have had fun; lots of laughs and enjoyment. To keep those we mentor, regardless of age, eagerly coming back for more, that time must be fun, entertaining and a shared experience.

Change

Adjustments are inevitable, such as variations in techniques, methodology, equipment and clothing from generation to generation, and should be expected. Gene Wensel wrote, "What we carry for weapons may vary, and how we hunt might be different, but what we carry in our heart is the same — we're all hunters."

Understand, the model should not and cannot be my way or the highway. While we teach and nurture mentees along, we must allow

them to take our experiences, lessons and insight and forge their own path. That way might look different than the trail we have blazed.

And we must remind ourselves that success can be measured in many ways, a fallen buck (or deer) you'll not always find. The true blessing is being nature's invited guest; the solitude and peace of mind.

Future Gains

As the waning hours of our final afternoon of hunting closed around Chris and me, there would be no dead buck to find; not this time, anyway. But Chris was not dismayed or sullen. After all, he'd yet to taste his first deer hunting success. That would have to wait until the next season.

However, he walked away with a newfound knowledge of whitetail deer and their habits, and a level of confidence that will aid him going forward — revelations that otherwise would have taken years to mature.

With this newfound insight and determination to succeed at something we know is not so easy, Chris is hooked. The excitement has even carried into the arrival of he and his wife's first child (a baby boy), by preparing the lad's nursery in colors of camo rather than traditional blue. Accents include deer tracks, antlers and other wildlife-related themes.

"The hunter's horn sounds early for some, later for others," Ruark wrote, and although being bugled later for Chris, the hunter's horn has sounded and will continue to be heard for the next generation. 🦌

Not growing up in a hunting family, my hunting partner of 11 years, Ian (left) began his whitetail deer schooling under my mentorship at the age of 36.



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REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

about Whitetail Institute products...



I've enclosed a photo looking northeast from the deck of our house in Iowa. It was about 4:30 p.m. or so in late January. The field they are grazing in is alfalfa with Imperial Whitetail Clover drilled in. Every day, there are deer grazing the parts of the field where the clover has been established. I never hunt this close to the house, and deer are comfortable coming in here. I am truly amazed how Imperial Whitetail Clover brings deer in close to where you want them to be and would highly recommend it to anyone wanting to start a high-quality food plot that is proven to get results.

Charles Coy Jr - Iowa



Bucks have been bigger every year since I planted Imperial Whitetail Clover. The turkeys love it too! Great work! Thanks Whitetail Institute for your time and effort put towards helping deer and deer hunters.

David Borg - Michigan

We've been using Whitetail Institute products for about six years and have had great success. This past year, we purchased some new land, and I called and talked with a Whitetail Institute consultant on what we should plant. Since the pH was not optimal, he recommended using Whitetail Oats Plus. (I also added No-Plow.) We did a lot of work to prepare the ground to plant, using liberal amounts of lime and fertilizer. I wasn't sure what the result would be, since this is the first year of planting. Needless to say, the results speak for themselves. Enclosed is a picture of my dad, Hank, with an 8-point buck he took this year on our Whitetail Oats Plus plot. He is 76, and this is his best buck in 34 years of hunting. This buck was a big deal for us. We have been hunting since 1982 and this is what we always hoped one day would happen. Thanks so much Whitetail Institute for helping us get there.

Mark Zakoski - Pennsylvania



I could write a book on how much food plots have increased the number of deer, quality of deer and just the great fun. The food plots and the strategies involved with them makes the sport so much more interesting and fun, not to mention the success.

Whitetail Institute has made this sport so fascinating I wish I was 20 years younger so I could experiment on an even greater level. I started using Whitetail Institute products 10 years ago. The first thing I noticed was that my doe population increased. The doe were hammering the clover. Around the last week in October, larger bucks from neighboring lands came to my land to service my growing population of does. One thing I have learned is that if you provide food for the does, they will stay, and if you have does, the bucks will find them, therefore my philosophy is feed my does the best nutrition and volume of food that will help them sustain, grow and survive the tough winters in northwestern Pennsylvania. The bucks are also sporting much larger racks.

What I saw happen on the farms I hunt in New York and Pennsylvania was incredible. The guys could not believe the number and size of the bucks we pulled in, not to mention the turkey and bears. I did bi-weekly reports to my buds, and they were astonished.



The volume of pictures was far too many to share, but I just had to send this to Whitetail Institute and thank you for everything.

I know I will have an even better experience next season. Photo 1 from a farm in New York that I have hunted for many years and the group photo shows the type of bucks we were accustomed to harvesting. We had a little meeting and decided we needed to start some major food plot plans. With our plots, the Imperial Whitetail Clover was king and we drew and held 38 different bucks, 16 of which were 7 points or larger and six were Pope and Young class bucks. It appears these bucks have taken up residency on this small farm. Photos 2 and 3 show two of the bucks we've taken since we started using Whitetail Institute products. Thanks, Whitetail Institute.

Dale Bohman - New York

I have two small plots of Imperial Whitetail Clover and a bigger plot that is a mixture of Whitetail Oats Plus, Winter Peas Plus and Ambush. I have been planting Whitetail Institute products since Imperial Whitetail Clover first came out. From the first plot, the deer sightings increased at least three-fold, and in a few years, the antlers and body size started to increase. Last year, I got my largest whitetail ever right here on my property in Tennessee, and I hunt Kansas and Colorado often. This deer (the one in the photo) started showing up on my cameras. He was in my plots three or four nights a week, but I never got a daylight photo of him. So, I started setting up in areas that I knew he would have to come through to get to bedding areas.

One morning, I saw a buck going away from me but it was still too dark to make him out, so I let him go. Ten minutes later, a doe came by me going to one of my small clover plots, and he was right behind her. I'm still on cloud nine.

Dan Mathias - Tennessee



Chip Watkins is the owner of Monquin Creek Outfitters in Virginia and has been managing his properties for habitat and wildlife for a number of years. Even with agricultural crops being grown on his farm, Chip realized he needed to do more for the wildlife. He experimented with different seed types and mixes over the years. Once he started using Whitetail Institute products, he was amazed at how the game was drawn to them and would hit these food plots hard. Some of his favorites to plant are Whitetail Oats Plus, Imperial Whitetail Clover, Tall Tine Tubers and Winter Peas Plus.

Chip also sets up mineral sites using Whitetail Institute's 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin Supplement, which helps the deer get what they need to increase body weight and antler mass and allows the does to come into fawning season healthier. This regimen of management and allowing deer to reach their full potential has been showing up with some of the deer taken over the last several years.

This past fall several big bucks were taken by Chip's clients, like the one Alex Cojocar shot this past muzzleloader season (photo 1) that scores in the upper 160s. I've also enclosed a trail camera photo (2) that shows two outstanding Virginia bucks on the property. This is proof that good management works even in the East where hunting pressure is the highest.

Hank T. - Virginia



(Continued on page 65)

Imperial Whitetail Tall Tine Tubers

Tall Tine Tubers is an all-turnip food-plot product developed by the Whitetail Institute as a food plot planting for deer. At the heart of Tall Tine Tubers is Tall Tine Turnip, a proprietary turnip variety you won't find anywhere except in Tall Tine Tubers and other Whitetail Institute food plot products.

When the Whitetail Institute completed development of Tall Tine Turnip, it first became available in Imperial Whitetail Tall Tine Tubers. Although Tall Tine Turnip has been included in several other Whitetail Institute food plot products, the popularity of Tall Tine Tubers has continued to climb. There are a number of reasons why.

Tall Tine Tubers exhibits critical characteristics that are especially important to hunters and managers — and to whitetails. It's easy to plant, establishes quickly and provides two sources of highly attractive food for deer from fall through winter: foliage and tubers. The foliage from Tall Tine Tubers starts producing heavy tonnage quickly. Many Whitetail Institute customers have reported that deer feed heavily on Tall Tine Tubers foliage as soon as it starts coming up but when frosts arrive later in the fall, the foliage produced by Tall Tine Tubers becomes even sweeter and becomes irresistible to deer. At this same time deer will also start digging the tubers from Tall Tine Tubers out of the ground. The foliage and tubers produced by Tall Tine Tubers continue to attract deer and provide them with critical nutrition through the cold winter months, a time when few natural food sources for deer remain and most planted forages are exhausted or buried under the snow.

It's no secret that when it comes to research, development and testing, no one goes to the effort the Whitetail Institute does. That's true of all Whitetail Institute forage products, and Tall Tine Tubers is no exception. The Whitetail Institute's research and development staff, certified research stations and free-range testers spent six years developing and testing Tall Tine Tubers to ensure it meets the Institute's industry-leading quality and performance standards.

Development of Tall Tine Turnip began by planting many turnip varieties in defined rows in a fall-planted food plot, and allowing free-range deer to preferentially browse them. Initial selections and evaluations were under natural feeding conditions with no fences or other restrictions to deer feeding. Plants that showed the greatest preference by deer were then isolated with exclusion cages to prevent further browsing so they could be evaluated for traits such as seed quality and insect and disease resistance, and so the plants could mature and produce seed. Plants deer didn't prefer or that didn't meet the Whitetail Institute's other strict quality and performance requirements were eliminated.

When the remaining caged plants produced seed, the seed was collected by thrashing each plant individually, and the process was repeated, each time isolating plants that showed the highest preference by deer and other performance requirements. After six years, the process resulted in a final population of seed that was used to plant the first seed-production fields of Tall Tine Turnips.

Is that effort worth it? The Whitetail Institute believes it is, and our customers who have tried Tall Tine Tubers overwhelmingly agree. It's the reason Whitetail Institute customers know they can expect nothing but the best from Tall Tine Tubers and all other Whitetail Institute products.

For information or to order Tall Tine Tubers, visit whitetailinstitute.com, or call the Whitetail Institute's in-house consultants at (800) 688-3030. 🦌



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TRUFIRE

ANNUALS or PERENNIALS? Decisions, Decisions



*Get the scoop on a logical food plot strategy
that takes advantage of the strengths of
annuals and perennials.*

By **Michael Veine**

Photos by Charles J. Alsheimer

You sure have a lot of choices when choosing seeds for food plots nowadays. It's a no brainer to go with the highest quality seeds you can find, such as the ones offered by the Whitetail Institute. But even then, you still have many choices among the quality stuff. With my hectic life, I like to keep food plots as simple as possible, and I've learned through trial and error what works best in the many types of soils where I grow food plots. I use perennials and annuals, and deciding what forage type to use is not that difficult when you apply logic.

I own hunting property in three distinctly different regions of Michigan: the southern Lower Peninsula, northern Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula. The deer hunting on all these properties is very good, but I prefer to hunt in the big-woods landscape of the U.P., where I can mix world-class grouse and waterfowl hunting with challenging deer hunting in the big woods. In fact, for the past several years, I have leased out the hunting rights on some of my land in the Lower Peninsula, and I get premium prices because I maintain prime food plots there. Those properties have produced amazing success for my renters, who return to lease from me year after year.



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- Imperial NO-PLOW® — 1/2 acre planting (9 lbs.)
- Imperial WINTER-GREENS® — 1/2 acre planting (3 lbs.)
- Imperial 30-06® Mineral — 1 lick (5 lbs.)
- Imperial 30-06® PLUS PROTEIN® — 1 lick (5 lbs.)
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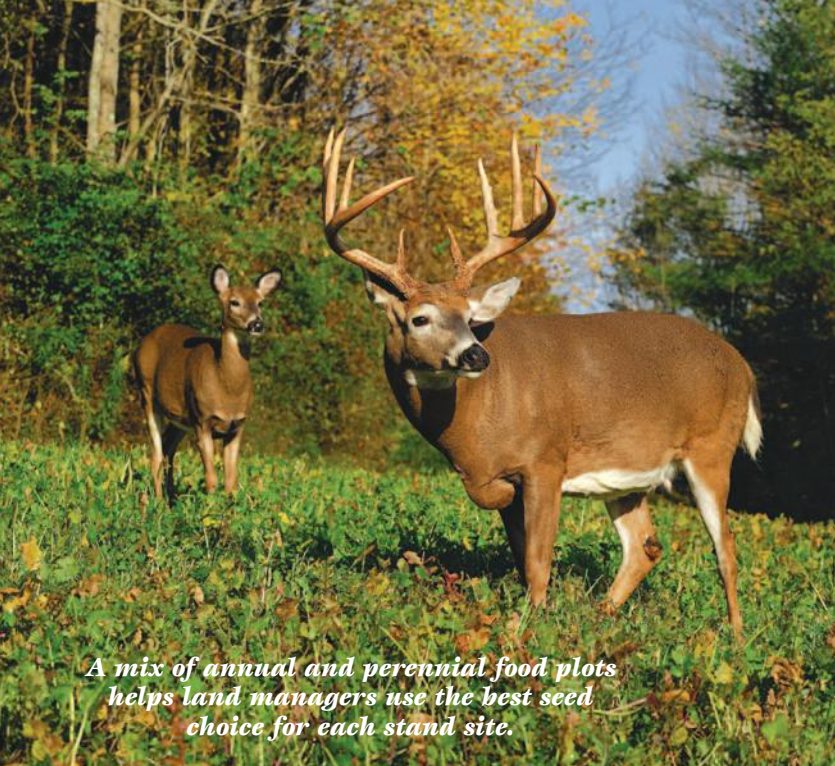
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A mix of annual and perennial food plots helps land managers use the best seed choice for each stand site.

My southern Lower Peninsula land features a mixture of high and low ground with some agriculture bordering the property. It's in a fairly populated area with extremely heavy hunting pressure on almost all the surrounding lands. My property offers a lot of thick bedding cover. I located three small food plots between the bedding cover and a neighboring farm field. That farm field typically has a mixture of corn, wheat, beans and alfalfa. These small plots are awesome stand locations because deer hit them consistently during daylight. The plots, though, are distinctly different, and I had to tailor forage choices accordingly.

One of the plots is pretty straightforward, with very good, heavy soil and a neutral pH. It is located along a wetland and is surrounded by thick brush. I have been using a perennial Imperial Whitetail Clover there for years with awesome success. For maintenance, I simply spray annually to control weeds and grasses, fertilize twice a year and mow it once or twice a year as needed.

Another plot however, sits along a ridge and has more sandy soil. Many large trees surround the field, which tend to rob moisture from the food plot. I have tried perennials there before, but during summer, the plot typically dries out too much, killing off most of the forage. Further, turkeys seem to really like to dig around in that plot, wreaking havoc on anything left growing there. This food plot is much better suited for an annual forage, and I have had great success there with Imperial No-Plow. No-Plow is simple to use. I spray the plot with Roundup a few weeks before planting time during late August. I make sure to expose the soil to ensure seed-to-soil contact and then I spread the seed using an Earthway crank-style broadcast spreader. I also spread fertilizer right after seeding using the same spreader. That's all it takes, and soon afterwards, that plot is lush and green, with deer using it like crazy.


My third plot is in the middle of a wetland, with part of it dry year-round and part prone to seasonal flooding. The high spots grow Imperial Whitetail Clover well. The lower spots are planted with annuals during late summer, when everything dries out. No-Plow and Secret Spot have worked well there, and Whitetail Oats Plus is also another outstanding choice.

My property in the northern Lower Peninsula is 100 percent forested with a very brushy understory. Oak, aspen and maples dominate the landscape. There's lots of agriculture in the area, with a high deer population. My soils there are very fertile, with heavy, black dirt that has a neutral pH. I opened a few spots on the property for small food plots and started with Imperial Whitetail Clover on all of them. The guy that rents the property, though, put a big spin-feeder in the middle of one of those small plots, and the clover got trampled to death as a result. One of the other plots is still thriving in clover five years later. I've experimented with various forages on the third plot, and everything I've tried there has done well, including Winter-Greens, No-Plow and Whitetail Oats Plus. During the past five years, that lease has produced a lot of nice deer, and the same guy has retained it for yet another year.

As mentioned, I really love hunting in the U.P. and have done so for decades. The U.P., though, has seen a dramatic decrease in deer numbers because of several consecutive hard winters combined with burgeoning predator populations. Wolves are especially taking a bite out of the deer herd. In the U.P., deer hunting success rates have plummeted in recent years, yet my property has bucked that trend, with the past two seasons bringing some of the best deer hunting success we have ever experienced. The main reason is that deer prefer our property over surrounding lands. The main draw on my property is a centrally located 5-acre food plot of Imperial Whitetail Clover. That clover plot feeds dozens of deer during spring, summer and fall, and requires minimal maintenance to keep thriving. I really appreciate the ease of maintaining Imperial Whitetail Clover because my time is very limited during summer for food plot work.

That allows me to focus my efforts on the 10 other small plots on my U.P. property, which are my main stand setups. Basically, I plant Imperial Whitetail Clover any place I can get it to grow on my U.P. property. I have a lot of plots or parts of plots where clover will not grow because of sandier soils or seasonal flooding. At those locations, I plant annuals. No-Plow and Secret Spot have been my go-to annuals on my U.P. property. Those products are extremely easy to use, especially on plots that are inaccessible with tillage equipment like I have at most of my sites. My U.P. property has very acidic soils that require regular lime applications to promote maximum forage growth, which attracts deer from neighboring land.

This past year, while hunting in the U.P., I harvested two big, adult bucks, extending my tag-filling streak there. The second buck I shot, a fat 8-pointer, caught one of my arrows at a small food plot that has produced a buck for me five consecutive years. That plot has a mixture of annuals and perennials, and it's hard to argue with success.

If I had more disposable time, I would plant a lot more annuals than I currently do. Many annuals have advantages because they are young and tender going into fall. That succulent new growth really turns deer on during hunting seasons and can attract deer to an area much better than perennials that have been browsed. Deer favor some annuals, such as Winter-Greens, later in the season when the plants go through a sweetening process. Still, most annuals require more of an investment in time, energy and money. I have plenty of energy and can budget the funding, but my main profession — owning and operating a Great Lakes charter boat — leaves me little time during the food plotting season of spring and summer. This is why I try to use perennials as much as possible and only turn to annuals when a site is best suited for it. Someday, when I retire and have time, my food plotting strategies may change. I can't wait. 

Whitetail Institute Customers Do the Talking About Whitetail Institute's Soil Testing Service

Having your soil tested by a qualified soil testing laboratory before you buy lime or fertilizer can make the difference between the best food plot you can imagine and total failure.

Yes, it's that important.

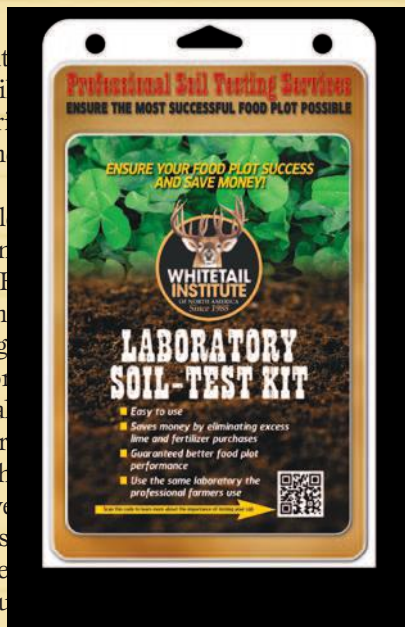
To grow and flourish, forage plants must uptake nutrients from the soil. That means two things: The nutrients must be at optimum levels, and plants must be able to access them.

In a perfect world, all soils would already have optimum levels of essential nutrients, and their soil pH would be neutral (6.5 to 7.5), the level at which high-quality forage plants can freely access them. Unfortunately, rarely is that true. Most farmland soils are deficient in one or more of the essential nutrients that high-quality forage plants need to thrive and they're also acidic (soil pH less than 6.5), a condition that impedes the ability of the plants to uptake nutrients. That's why land managers usually have to add lime to a seedbed to correct low soil pH and fertilize it to bring deficient nutrients to optimum levels before planting.

You can see how important laboratory soil testing is when you take all that into account and then add one more fact: Soils differ in their ability to hold lime and fertilizer activity. That's why having a qualified soil testing laboratory scientifically analyze a sample of your soil is the only way to determine the exact amount of lime and the exact amount and type of fertilizer needed to bring the soil in your food plot up to optimum soil pH and fertility.

The Whitetail Institute's soil testing service provides full laboratory testing that is second to none in scientific and technical accuracy, and the cost of a Whitetail Institute soil test kit is about the same as other high-quality soil test kits from agricultural universities and most county extension offices. It's the other benefits Whitetail Institute soil testing offers that puts it at the head of the pack for food plotters.

Whitetail Institute laboratory soil testing pays off in two ways: with better-quality food plots and the potential to save you money. That's much more than the small price of the kit. The kit is easy to use, the lab's response time is extremely fast and the report you get back is vastly easier to read and follow than soil test reports designed for commercial farmers. And, maybe best of all, if you have questions about your report, the Whitetail Institute's in-house consultants are extremely knowledgeable and eager to help. But you don't have to take our word for it. We'll let our customers do the talking.



Better-Quality Food Plots

Excellent product! Takes the guesswork out of food plotting

"I love these soil test kits. They couldn't be easier to use and they yield excellent results every time. The results come in quickly and the reports are easy to read and my plots always look like they're out of a whitetail magazine. Will continue using forever!"

Totally accurate results

"This soil sample test kit was easy, fast and accurate. It told me exactly what I needed to put in the ground in order for my food plot to grow its best. The plot growth results are absolutely amazing."

Highly recommend! Easy to use

"The Whitetail Institute's soil test kit is so easy to use. Everything is explained thoroughly in the included documents. I had my results back three days after I mailed my sample in. I can see the difference between last year and this year by adding the correct amount of nutrients to the ground."

Saves You Money by Eliminating Unnecessary Lime and Fertilizer Purchases

Fantastic easy-to-read results

"The results opened our eyes on how far off we thought our pH was. The kit just saved us over \$900 alone in lime for this year."

Saved time and money

"I had never done a soil test before. I had just been using the default lime/fertilizer noted on the products. The soil test actually came back telling me I needed less lime, less fertilizer. The cost of the soil test was minimal compared to the money I saved on unneeded fertilizer and lime. My plots are all small and secluded so I have to use bagged pelleted lime and fertilizer so the savings were well worth the effort.

As of now, everything has been planted for two weeks and is looking fantastic! I'm so glad I took the time for this. Well worth the effort."

Must do

"I saved quite a bit of money on fertilizer by doing the soil test and applied exactly what the plants needs are for optimal growth."

Highly Accurate Recommendations (Only Possible with Laboratory Soil Testing)

Detail

"I really appreciate the information specific to each product I plan on using in my plots. This is not a general recommendation test."

Easy and fast

"I had my results in about a week. Results were easy to read and told me exactly what I needed to do in order to have the best soil for the product I was planting."

A must have

"I was unsure of the test kit so I skipped it and instead went with an at-home kit to test pH. The at-home kit showed me how far I was off on my pH but that was it. It tried to tell me how much but the scales are tough to understand and very broad.

I decided to return and get the test kit from Whitetail Institute. It comes with a bag, instructions and a shipping bag. The instructions were easy to follow and it is packaged well.

The results were amazing. Told me exact numbers and what I needed to do to get my soil ready. I was shocked! I will always use this product when doing future food plots."

Inexpensive

Great product

"Inexpensive, easy-to-follow instructions and quick results."

No-brainer

"Cheap. Quick. Simple. Thorough."

Fast and easy to use

"Inexpensive way to be sure you have the right fertilizer and lime."

Easy to Use

The kit includes an instruction sheet, a soil sample bag and a pre-addressed envelope for sending the completed kit to the lab.

Simple and fast results

"Very pleased with how easy it was to collect, send and get a very easy-to-understand report with recommendations."

Must have

"Great product, easy to use and a must have if you are going to raise the best food plots."

Easiest soil test ever

"This was the easiest soil test ever. Everything you need is mailed right to you. Follow the instructions and send it in. The report you get is easy to read and very informative."

Quick Turnaround

In most cases, the Whitetail Institute soil testing lab processes a soil sample and sends the report to the customer within 24 to 48 hours after receiving the completed soil test kit. You can elect to have the report mailed or, to get your report even faster, emailed.

Fast and simple

"Dropped my samples at the post office at 4 p.m.. Monday and received my electronic test results at 8 a.m. Wednesday."

Quick results

"My results on three plots were emailed to me in less than 24 hours from when the samples were delivered to the lab."

A must have

"Lightning-fast results from this simple and easy-to-use soil test kit.

Results were in my inbox in exactly four days. Thank you."

Lab Report That's Easy to Understand

The report you get from the lab tells you exactly what you need to know, without overcomplicating it and in an easy-to-follow format.

Easy to understand and fast

"The report came back with easy-to-understand diagnosis of soil condition as well as amendment recommendations based upon both per acre and per 1,000 square feet sizes, which makes the math easy for those of us with smaller food plots. Results came back within the week. I definitely will be using every year."

Soil test you can understand

"I have been having the Extension Service Lab do my soil test. The only problem was that I could not read them. Whitetail Institute soil tests are written with fertilizer recommendations that you can understand because they are written just like the notations on the fertilizer bag, i.e. 10-10-10 or 0-20-20. In addition, the fertilizers that are recommended are matched to fertilizers that are readily available in your area."

Great for food plotters

"I've used my local extension office in the past, but their recommendations are for commercial crops, not food plots. I'll be using these on every farm in the future."

Personal Assistance from Whitetail Institute In-House Consultants

If you have questions about your soil test report (or a soil test report from any other soil testing laboratory), help is just a phone call away. The Whitetail Institute's highly trained in-house consultants can answer any questions.

Excellent value

"The results came back ahead of my expectation and were extremely detailed yet easy to understand. The response via telephone for questions was well beyond my expectations. I will most definitely use this product service again and again. Well done, folks."

Amazingly professional feedback

"I have taken advantage of using the service of soil testing through Whitetail Institute. I am very pleased and impressed with this service. When calling for guidance on any matter I have always received amazing and professional feedback."

Easy, quick, worth it

"I'm not a farmer and was clueless about how to plant a food plot. This soil test was a fast way to bring me up to speed. I had some follow up questions and got them answered with a quick phone call to Whitetail Institute. Highly recommend the test kit."

To speak with a consultant, call (800) 688-3030, extension 3. The consultants are available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. 🌲

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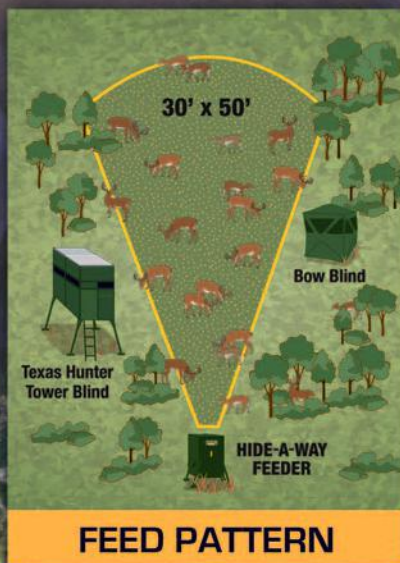
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Trail Cameras and 30-06: *a Perfect Match*

By **Matt Harper**
Photos by the Author

This dandy combination lets you get great photos, make better management decisions and improve the overall health of your deer herd.



This is a great way to estimate your fawn recruitment. Does will train their fawns where to find the mineral sites, and those fawns will return year after year.

Have you heard the expression “marrying up?” If not, it essentially means marrying someone far above you in physical appearance and/or intellect. If that’s your situation, we have something in common. Comparing me to my wife is something akin to a buzzard to a swan — and not an above-average buzzard, either. Nonetheless, I’ve been able to fool her for more than two decades. A boss once told me you can tell a good salesman by looking at his wife, and if that’s the case, I might be the best ever.

We are surrounded by odd combinations in the hunting world, or at least they might seem odd to someone who doesn’t hunt. Who would imagine that dousing yourself and the surrounding area in urine would be a sound strategy, or that getting up at some crazy early hour to sit in the cold remotely equates to having a good time? To hunters, though, these combinations make sense. Wet dogs in a duck blind or dusty, smoke-filled cabins that seem more comfortable than your living room are great combinations that hunters understand. But even avid hunters might not have considered many combinations that work extremely well.

Cameras

There’s little argument that trail cameras are one of the most revolutionary products to hit the hunting industry. With these great devices, you can know what, where, how and when critters move on your hunting property. Cameras can help you determine buck inventory, identify shooters and determine which bucks might need a couple of years to grow. I believe cameras have played at least some role in the increasing age of bucks harvested. A buck that might look like a shooter when you first see him but you might let him live another year if you have countless pictures and you know he is a 3-1/2-year-old. Cameras can help you determine deer density and estimate your buck-to-doe ratio. They can also show you birthing rates and subsequent fawn survival. Further, cameras can provide insight about the health of your deer herd based on the animals’ physical condition.

Cameras can even give you a good idea of what predator problems you might face — four-legged and two-legged. Of course, cameras are not just used for management but can also be vital scouting tools, opening a window into deer movement timing and locations. And they can also be just plain fun. I’ve used cameras for many years, and every time I check a card, it’s like Christmas morning, not knowing what you’ll get when you click. With the advent of wireless trail cameras, presents now arrive on your phone, and you don’t have to go anywhere. I suppose it’s like the Amazon version of deer photos.

Cameras can also give you some of the coolest pictures in your library. Being an outdoors photographer, I take a ton of photos, but it’s not my full-time job, and I cannot spend hours waiting for the right shots. But my cameras are out there 24 hours a day, and although they’re not analyzing light, angles and subject matter, they take thousands of photos, some of which I know I would never get without them. I realize some say cameras are cheating, and an overdependence on them leads to an underdevelopment of traditional woodsmanship. I get that argument, and I believe that honing your hunting skills is important, but that doesn’t mean that you can’t have both. Sometimes,



Cameras can help identify predator problems — four-legged and two-legged.

technology is good — especially when it can be used to enhance the overall experience.

Imperial 30-06

New technology spawned the appearance of another revolutionary product several years ago: Imperial 30-06 Mineral/Vitamin Supplement. Until then, hunters typically just used salt if anything on their property. Some might have used a cattle mineral, but 30-06 was the first of its kind: a mineral/vitamin supplement designed specifically for deer. It's little wonder the company responsible for the first forage designed for whitetail deer (Imperial Whitetail Clover) would also recognize that a deer's needs for minerals and vitamins were different than those of cattle, and that salt alone did little to improve the nutritional plane of whitetails.

Instead, Whitetail Institute researchers formulated 30-06 to match the specific nutritional needs of the entire deer herd. Customers using 30-06 began seeing tremendous results, including healthier fawns, bigger-bodied deer and increased antler growth. The reason lies in the nutrients, nutrient levels and specific ingredients used to create 30-06. Today, most people know calcium and phosphorus are vital nutrients involved in milk production, body weights and antler growth, but when 30-06 was developed, most did not.

Whitetail Institute researchers knew calcium and phosphorus comprise the largest percentage of mineral in antler, and that often, these minerals are lacking in the soil and vegetation deer eat. Therefore, supplementing these critical minerals would undoubtedly improve performance. But it was not enough to have these nutrients in the product. The product had to have them in right ratios, amounts and from the right sources to guarantee optimal digestion and usage.

Mineral needs, however, go far beyond just calcium and phosphorus, which is why researchers also included other macro minerals, such as magnesium. Magnesium is a critical component of bone and antler growth and is deficient in many soils. Zinc, copper, manganese, selenium, iron and cobalt are trace minerals also found in 30-06. Each are vital for maximum health, body weight and overall growth but are often deficient in the forages deer consume. Rounding out the nutritional package are fat-soluble vitamins A, D and E, which are important antioxidants that function in immunity, breeding and mineral transport in the blood, along with other functions.

Together, the minerals and vitamins in 30-06 provide an invaluable supplement, producing results that speak for themselves. Tens of thousands of deer hunters and managers across the country have seen results that provide proof of the importance of supplementation, producing bigger, healthier deer.

The Combination

Independently, trail cameras and 30-06 are great hunting and managing tools. But combining them can produce even better results. For example, trail cameras are great, but only if you get pictures of deer. That seems like a fairly obvious observation, but I remember when I started using trail cameras. Frustrated, I perused through countless pictures of nothing but squirrels, rabbits, birds and tree branches blown by the wind. And these weren't digital but rather old-school film cameras producing piles of useless printed photos. I would get the film, wait the two to three days for the pictures or sometime pay the extra for one-hour photo service, only to be disappointed with

deerless pictures. Part of the problem was camera technology, which has advanced greatly. Another problem was I didn't know what I was doing.

Then I bought a bag of 30-06 and poured it in front of one of my cameras because I was told it "attracted deer." And attract deer it did. From the time I started combining 30-06 with my camera setups, I got pictures of deer — a lot of deer — and it was rare for a non-deer picture to show up. Over the years this combination has produced thousands of great deer photos because of the attraction power of 30-06.

You might say you can get the same results by pouring a bag of salt or using some kind of deer lollipop attractant. I would argue the attraction quality of 30-06 versus salt or pure attractants, but certainly they could act in a similar fashion, even if it's not as good. The difference is that although you might get deer pictures, your deer receive little to no nutritional benefit. Using 30-06 to pull deer in front of your camera means you're providing deer with a nutritional supplement that will improve their nutritional plane and overall herd condition. As discussed, 30-06 is formulated to supply critical nutrients often lacking in the soil and forages deer eat. Even in areas with rich soils, such as the agricultural regions of the Midwest, soils will lack one or more minerals. 30-06 supplements these minerals, showing results that can be seen on the cameras to which the deer are being attracted.

As management tools, cameras help to provide critical information and statistics on the status of deer on your property. But again, this will only happen if most of the herd can be caught on camera. Research has shown that mineral sites — particularly long-established mineral sites — are used regularly by a large percentage of the local deer population to the point where it becomes part of a consistent, albeit sometimes random, travel pattern. When deer find a mineral site, they will return to it year after year provided there's mineral present. Research has shown that does will bring their fawns to mineral sites, essentially training the fawns to return after they are weaned from the doe.

This is especially true for doe fawns that become part of a matriarchal group. With this type of consistency, performing deer density studies, buck-to-doe ratio analysis, fawn survivability rates and an overall deer health evaluation becomes easier in terms of quality and quantity of data. In turn, better and more accurate results. Each year, I use cameras at mineral sites to determine fawn survivability. One year, I noticed that during spring and summer, fawns were disappearing from the herd. A doe photographed early in spring with triplets was seen a few days later with only two, and then one and eventually none. At first, I suspected disease, but I later figured out I had a predator problem.

I had many photos of coyotes and large bobcats, and although I did not have a photo of a mountain lion, a couple of neighbors saw one near the farm. I found its tracks but never got a photo. Coincidentally, at least two confirmed mountain lions were found that year within 60 miles of my property. Knowing that fawn survivability was poor that year, I dropped the number of does I intended to harvest to compensate for lack of replacement. In another year, I was able to diagnose early that I had a disease issue, which unfortunately turned out to be the worst EHD outbreak I had ever seen. I lost several deer that year, but my neighbors lost more. I cannot say that 30-06 was the sole reason for the lower losses, but I suspect the higher nutritional level — especially considering many of the nutrients in 30-06 support immune



Cameras can provide insight about the health of your deer herd based on the animals' physical condition.

functions — could have played some part in making the situation better. Regardless, knowing my situation early let me plan my harvest strategy to cope with the circumstances.

Strategies

Although cameras and 30-06 work well together, there is some strategy about where and how to use them to maximize results. First, I like to establish mineral sites at locations that provide cover. I have had some success with mineral sites in more open areas, but the sites that get used by deer most consistently are those in good cover. These yearly destination sites are characterized by a convergence of heavily used trails and a large dug-out area in the ground, and they're exactly what I want to use for my management cameras. If there are no sites established on a property, I scout to find well-traveled trails in medium-to-heavy cover, placing test sites two to three feet off the trail.

I do this at multiple locations, and then let the deer tell me which they prefer. I have done this with sites that were only 100 yards apart, with one being used heavily while the other hardly at all. The reason is not always clear, but it can be because of soil make-up (mineral sites work less effectively in sandy soils) or whether deer feel comfortable and safe at that location. In this process, I might try five to six locations in a 40-acre section and start them with just five pounds of 30-06. When the predominant site is established, I abandon all but one or two of the test sites and focus on heavily used sites. Typically, I end up with one site per 40 acres, but in areas with a heavy deer popula-

tion, I might have one per 20 acres to decrease site-competition stress.

The reason for not having more sites is threefold. From a nutritional management standpoint, it's unneeded, provided you keep the site fresh with mineral. Second, too many sites cause more random deer usage and are less likely to create a destination site. Last, it requires more cameras. I will, however, try new locations each year, partly because I can't help myself from trying something new. In some cases, a site might go cold for some reason, such as a change in the surrounding cover or too much human presence, so I like to have test backup sites.

Cameras and Imperial 30-06 work great independently, but when combined, they can enhance each other's benefits. If you want to improve the nutrition available to your deer herd, get great photos that can help you make good management decisions or simply just want cool photos of deer, I encourage you to try this combo. I have no doubt you will like the results.

(30-06 products are so attractive to deer that some states consider them bait. Check your local game laws before using or hunting over a 30-06 site). 🔥

Imperial Whitetail ALFA-RACK[®] PLUS

Diverse forage plants ensure Alfa-Rack success and popularity

When it comes to the long-term success of Whitetail Institute food plot products, Alfa-Rack Plus is one of the best examples you'll find. One of the reasons for its ex-

The alfalfa varieties in Alfa Rack Plus, though, are different because they're designed for browsing instead of hay production. As a result, they produce more foliage relative to stem than hay alfalfas and are more palatable and attractive to whitetails. And like other alfalfas, the browsing alfalfas in Alfa-Rack Plus are highly drought-tolerant.

WINA-100 Perennial Forage Chicory: The third perennial type is superior to other alfalfas because it is more drought-tolerant. Unlike other alfalfas, it is more palatable and attractive to whitetails. WINA-100 is a perennial forage alfalfa that is highly palatable to whitetails. WINA-100 alfalfa produces several times more foliage than other alfalfas and is highly drought-resistant.

WINA-100 alfalfa is designed to be planted in 10 inches of rain per year. It is moderately to well adapted to a wide range of soils and alfalfa production is critical. Alfa-Rack Plus alfalfa has a pH of 6.5.

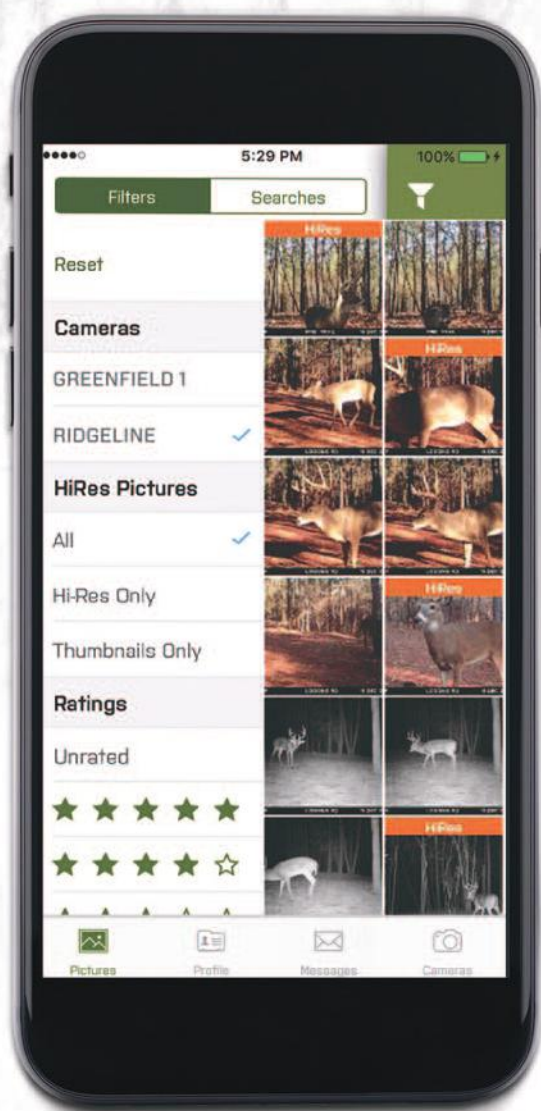
Alfa-Rack Plus goes to the Whitetail In-

Upgraded clover varieties marks of the Whitetail Institute's success in the food plot market. To scientifically develop new varieties through traditional, non-GMO methods is time-consuming and tedious. Given the Whitetail Institute's requirements for attractiveness

The Whitetail Institute's products are an example. The first success was developed by Dr. Wiley Johnson, the first director of forage research at the Imperial Whitetail Clover Institute. The process of selecting varieties, including new clover varieties, has been continuing and is the basis for our food plot products. Our newest clover has been added to various Whitetail Institute products, such as Alfa-Rack Plus.

Browsing alfalfas: Alfalfa is well known for its attractiveness to deer. Hay-type alfalfas are most attractive when young or when new growth appears just after mowing. As they mature, though, they become stemmier and therefore less attractive and palatable.





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Managing for

Big Bucks In the East

With proper planning and execution, you can grow and harvest mature deer in the hard-hunted eastern United States.

By **Jeremy Flinn**

Photo by Charles J. Alsheimer

Growing big deer is not easy. Though it might be a bit more feasible in some areas of the country, it still can be a challenge. But if we remove ourselves from the fertile soils of the Midwest, the low hunter density of the Great Plains and the massive ranches of the Southwest, you're left with the tough conditions of the whitetail's Eastern range. From the palmettos of Florida's panhandle to the mountains of the Appalachians, growing and harvesting big bucks is not something you often hear about — at least not as often as you might in the farm fields of Iowa or senderos of Texas. Thus, many hunters flock from the East to those destinations in search of big bucks.

However, with proper planning, quality execution and a lot of patience, you can grow big bucks across the East and put one on the wall.

Components of Growing Big Bucks

Without understanding what creates a big buck, it will be almost impossible to manage your property in the East, let alone anywhere, for big bucks. Three basic components are required to create a big buck: age, nutrition and genetics.

Before we debate management factors, let's agree that "big buck" is not a universal measurement. For some, that's a 170-inch buck. For others, it's a 10-pointer. In the coastal plain of South Carolina, that might be any 125-inch Pope & Young deer. In West Virginia, it might be any 2-year-old or older buck. For the purposes of this article, we'll consider a big buck a deer that's atypically large for the area. That doesn't mean a state record. Rather, if you're used to seeing 100-inch bucks, a 140-plus inch buck is a big buck.

Let's first address the elephant in the room: genetics. Yes, some deer have better genetics than others. We won't get into enclosures and deer breeding, as it would double the length of the article. But if we think about free-range deer, on average, most adult bucks will be 8-pointers. Right out of the gate, that will throttle the score of most

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bucks. I'm not saying there aren't 150- to 170-inch 8-pointers (there are). Rather, a 12-pointer has a much better chance of scoring high than an 8-pointer. The bottom line is that two bucks are rarely the same, and in a free-range situation, you'll have a tough time altering genetics through standard harvests. However, in areas with antler-point restrictions, there might be a genetic shift in antler size, but not necessarily always for the good. Rather, higher-quality young bucks are vulnerable to harvest, and inferior bucks can move up in age class. This isn't the article for that debate, but it warrants your attention.

No buck can get big without age. That requires several potential management actions. First, deer won't get older if you shoot them. Passing on bucks is a concept deer hunters of 50 years ago would have called insanity. Today, hunters likely pass hundreds of thousands of bucks as a group annually. Sure, some of those get shot, but that's the risk you must take to get deer into older age classes and consequently allow for larger racks. If hunting pressure around you is heavy, you can manage your property to be a safe haven. By planting quality annual and perennial food plots, such as Imperial Winter-Greens and Fusion, respectively, as well as managing the native habitat for browse and excellent cover, you can attract and protect more bucks than if you simply hunt the property.

Let's discuss one of the most influential factors for managing for big bucks: nutrition. Folks in the East are at a disadvantage in terms of soil quality. We likely aren't hunting the rich, dark fertile soil of the Midwest and Great Plains, but that doesn't mean we can't provide high-quality nutrition. It's critical to understand the needs of deer. For example, high protein in spring and summer will help build muscle and antlers.

So, having Imperial Whitetail Clover available for spring and PowerPlant for summer can ensure a great source of protein. As deer come out of fall and enter winter, Winter-Greens or Beets & Greens can provide great sources of protein and energy when other food sources are scarce. In addition to food plots, maintaining high-quality native habitat can provide a year-round source of nutrition for deer. If your property relies solely on food plots to feed deer, those plots may be mowed down. It's about finding that fine balance.

Location Is Everything

The first thing many of you will say is you only have "one place to hunt," but that's far from the truth. Maybe you only have one piece of private ground to hunt, but that doesn't mean you can't knock on doors, lease property or hunt dreaded public land. Whether you are in the Adirondack Mountains of New York or the coastal plain of Georgia, you can get on a big buck.

Of course, the place you start might not be where you succeed in finding or growing a big buck, but that's why having options is critical. Most hunters will stick to the basics of a good property. First, they need access. That's a given. Most will look for a great source of food and cover. But that's about as far as eight out of 10 hunters will go — and there is so much more.

Think about the successful properties of the Midwest and Great Plains. Ask, "Why are there big bucks?" You aren't going to change the entire soil structure, but you can manipulate certain spots for food plots by using lime to change pH, and fertilizers to add nutrients back into the soil. But what factors can you control at a landscape level? Hunting pressure is one of the main killers of your chances at big bucks. Big-buck strongholds in Kansas and Iowa have very low hunter

densities. Less hunting pressure allows bucks to feel more comfortable moving during hunting hours, and it lets deer get older, thereby generating bigger bucks.

These types of areas exist even in the heaviest hunted areas of Pennsylvania and New York. Though other hunters might be on the property you're hunting, you can always escape the crowds by walking farther and deeper. This is one of the greatest tactics for folks with access to big tracts of state, federal or timber company lands. In many cases, access roads are closed to motorized vehicles when the season opens, reducing disturbances, and you might find a secluded Imperial Whitetail Clover or Whitetail Oats Plus food plot buried deep on a public tract. These are more common than you think, as many conservation groups work to improve the hunting quality of public lands. Covering these large tracts can be difficult, but you can cut some corners with today's technology.

Locating Big Bucks in The East

Just because you manage land or gain access to a well-managed property doesn't mean it will be easy to find big bucks. However, today's deer hunters have more tools at their fingertips than before. From trail cameras that deliver pictures to your phone to aerial imagery of any hunting parcel in the United States, the ability to do more homework without leaving home is a huge advantage. That doesn't mean scouting the browsing pressure of your Alfa-Rack Plus or scrape activity isn't extremely critical. However, you can maximize your time afield by honing in on areas of interest.

Google Earth is one of the most underutilized tools for hunters. Though there are many great mapping tools available, a simple download to their computer or tablet (and phone in some cases) gives any hunter high-resolution aerial imagery of properties they're scouting — for free. By studying these digital maps, hunters can identify wildlife openings, food plots, crop plantings, clearcuts and even different timber-stand types. Although the detail will still be in the final legwork, these tools can save a lot of wasted time looking for what doesn't exist.

Trail cameras are by far the No. 1 scouting assistant for hunters. Whether you have one camera over a PowerPlant plot in summer or a network of cellular trail cameras covering multiple properties providing real-time information, you're gaining valuable insight that you would have otherwise not known. Just having cameras out and getting pictures is great, but the amount of useful information — from scrape activity to pressure or activity on a food plot — can let you optimize your hunting sites to increase the likelihood of getting on a large buck. This is extremely important in the East, where large open fields are not nearly as common as they are in the Midwest. Trying to pattern bucks in Eastern woodlands is not as easy to do without trail cameras.

Just because you aren't in a typical big buck area does not mean you can't manage, find and harvest one. It's not going to be easy, but that's the best part — the journey. Knowing that you had an active role in creating a big buck in the East, regardless of his outcome, is something to take pride in. 🦌

Jeremy Flinn is a content marketer and professional deer biologist from Pennsylvania. A native of high-pressure hunting areas, Jeremy has managed many Eastern properties, producing and harvesting many high-quality bucks.

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

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REAL HUNTERS DO THE TALKING

(Continued from page 45)

about Whitetail Institute products...



We have been using Whitetail Institute products for approximately 10 years, maybe a little longer. We manage 474 acres of ground in northwestern Pennsylvania that has what we feel the ultimate whitetail habitat.

We have water, thick brush, a lot of mature white oak, apple, and beech trees, overgrown fields and reclaimed farm crop fields. We have rotated products over the years and have found that by planting a large variety of foods we are keeping deer, along with turkey and bear on our property all year. We plant around 12 acres in food plots each year using a mix of Chicory Plus (now Fusion), No-Plow in hard to reach areas, Whitetail Oats Plus and Tall Tine Tubers. We also utilize 30-06 Mineral/Vitamins from end of January to end of August and some supplemental feed in the winter months. This year, we will be planting Fusion in two new fields along with our normal go-to products. We manage our property for large, mature bucks and I have enclosed a picture of one of the three bucks taken on the first day of this past years Pennsylvania rifle season. Over the last two years, we have harvested some large whitetails, one buck two years ago that scored 178-3/8 that ran in *Whitetail News* last year and another that scored 143-1/8. Both with bows. I feel with the use of great food plot seed and other products along with good management, anyone anywhere can have these results.

Doug Dick - Pennsylvania



I wanted to share some photos I have taken of my farm and of Whitetail Institute products. Whitetail Institute has always been so generous with help, time and expert advice for me that I wanted to show some of the results.

First off, I wanted to say besides having food plots planted with Whitetail Institute products I also have taken it a step further on my property. I have seeded Whitetail Institute products on my ponds and my field roads between cash crops of corn and soybeans I have planted. I am a big believer in plenty of available quality food/nutrition for the deer. I also have had deer dig down in 2 feet of snow on my field roads and by my ponds to get to the Imperial Whitetail Clover.

The buck in the photo is at one of my 30-06 mineral licks.

I greatly appreciate all the help and support through the years. I look forward to continuing this relationship with Whitetail Institute in the years to come. All the best in deer and hunting.

Scott Smolen - Wisconsin



I have been using Whitetail Institute products for 11 years on my farm in Maryland. Over the years, I've used just about every food plot seed product they provide. But my all-time favorite is Imperial Whitetail Clover. I have a 2-acre plot, and with the help of Whitetail Institute customer service personnel, I have managed to establish a quality food plot that attracts and holds deer on my farm. I've communicated numerous times with Whitetail Institute consultants to obtain advice on weed control and other food plot information. Providing quality nutrition to our deer herd is essential for body size and antler growth. And I can attest that you don't always need larger plots to attract deer. This 12-point was taken yesterday on my farm with bow and arrow. I want to thank Whitetail Institute for many years of excellent customer service and quality food plot products.

Vince Peranio - Maryland

Send Us Your Photos!

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

info@whitetailinstitute.com

or send them to:

Whitetail News, Attn: Field Tester Response
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Please send _____ 1/2 gallon(s) of ARREST MAX Herbicide.

Call for larger quantities.

TOTAL \$ _____

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

Coupon Price: \$79.92 or \$44.97

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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.

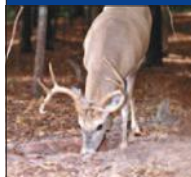
Call for larger quantities.

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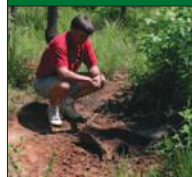
Please send _____ ☐ 1 Block @ \$24.95

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



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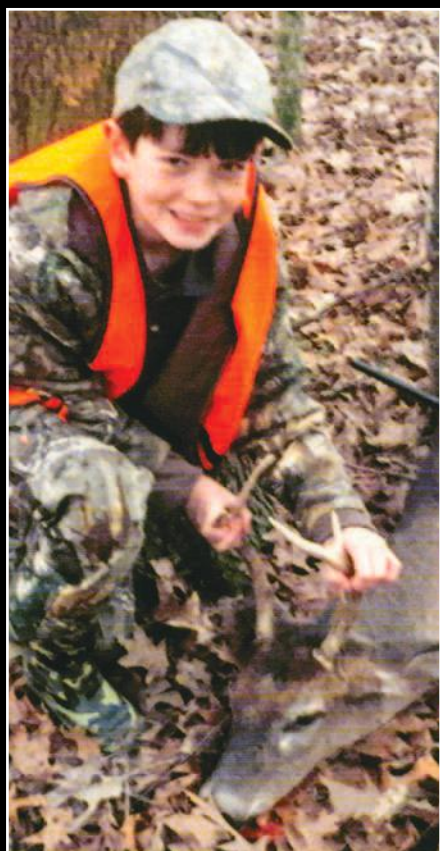
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Vol. 28, No. 1 / WHITETAIL NEWS 67



Jake Skipper – Mississippi

I killed my first deer about 5:15 p.m. on a Monday in late January. I was hunting with my grandparents in my favorite spot, “The Secret Garden.” As it got late in the day, I was afraid I would not see my deer, but then an 8-point buck walked out of the woods. I put in my earplugs, picked up my rifle and sighted carefully. When I took the shot, I saw the buck run into the woods and disappear. I was afraid I had missed. We waited a few minutes, and then my grandparents and I went to track him. We found him a few yards into the trees. I mounted the skull to hang on my wall to remember my first deer.

Brian Switzer – Pennsylvania

I want to thank Whitetail Institute for helping my wife, Tammy, get her first buck. The buck was heading into our Imperial Whitetail Clover food plot when she shot it. Tammy has been lucky enough to get a few does before but never a buck. I’ve been a hunter for 40 years, and we always tried to get between where they bed and where they feed, but now they come to us. I don’t mind evolving. Big Whitetail Institute fan.



Brent Van Hook – Kansas

Just yesterday, a friend remarked how many deer we see on our little 80-acre property. My friend has six times the acres that we have but harvests a third of the deer that we do. We attract so many quality deer with Whitetail Institute products that we use our land to invite friends to hunt with us including people who have never hunted before. Attached is a picture of our children’s former pastor and the button buck that he shot on his first hunting trip. He’s pictured with my son who served as his “guide” and also shot a deer — an 8-point buck — during the same hunt. Thanks for your great products!

First Deer is presented and sponsored by TRACT OPTICS. Visit them online at www.tractoptics.com. Email your First Deer photos and story to info@whitetailinstitute.com or send them to Whitetail Institute of North America, 239 Whitetail Trail, Pintlala 36043, Attn.: First Deer Dept.

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

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

CAUTION

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



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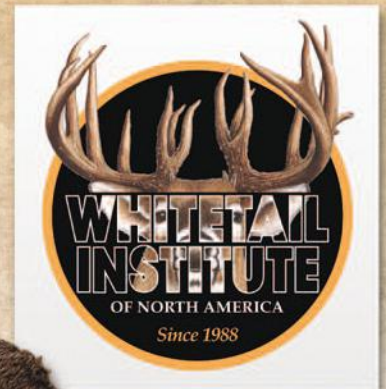
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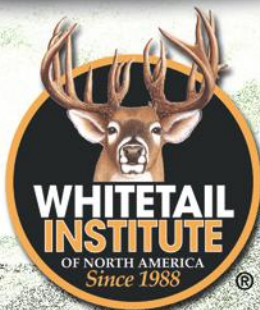
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Imperial Whitetail Clover

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SINCE 1988



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

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

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NEW

6X7 BIG COUNTRY PLATINUM 360°

**THE NEW 6 X 7 BIG COUNTRY 360 BLIND
IS THE KING OF ALL REDNECK BLINDS.**

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



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