



- CONCEAL IS DESIGNED
to rapidly provide a thick screen of
cover for food plots, bedding or hunter
travel to stand locations.

USING CONCEAL TO BOOST HUNTING SUCCESS

This versatile, fast-growing product provides many avenues to
improve your land and hunting.

■ by *Gerald Almy*
PHOTOS BY JASON SAY

- THIS DRONE PHOTO

shows how Conceal provides the perfect solution to let hunters travel to and from stand sites without spooking deer feeding on their food plot.



Slipping stealthily through the tall, green vegetation, I reached the camouflaged ground blind and eased inside. Cooling down from the hike, I slowly arranged every item of gear and settled back with my .50-caliber muzzleloader to see what the evening would bring.

Several does were already entering the plot, and I tried to calm my racing heartbeat. I had split the plot between Imperial Whitetail Clover and Whitetail Oats Plus. The forage preference of deer seemed to vary from week to week, but that afternoon, they were heading toward the clover. That would work perfectly.

I had waited a long time to hunt that plot, and the day of reckoning had finally arrived. Trail cameras had shown a 7-point 3-year-old using the plot during days with a northwest wind. Having approached from the south, I knew the deer wouldn't scent me.

The buck was not particularly large, and he was not the type of 3-year-old I wanted breeding with local does. Given the chance, I planned to kill him before he mated with too many does. Can that help the overall herd? Probably not, but I like to do my small part. And because western Virginia allows two buck tags, I could still pursue a 4- or 5-year-old trophy with the second permit.

Everything was going perfectly. The does had not seen me approach and enter the blind. Heck, they couldn't even see the blind because of the tall vegetation surrounding it, interspersed with strategic openings through which I could launch an arrow or .50-caliber bullet.

A few hours after I arrived, the sun started to settle behind the western horizon, and the 7-pointer eased into the clover. Carefully cocking the rifle, I waited for the perfect shot. It's funny how you can hunt for decades and still get goose bumps when a buck walks into range. Controlling those emotions as best as I could, I squeezed off on the deer's shoulder. As blue smoke filled the air, I saw the buck react before running to the edge of nearby woods.

I let my racing heartbeat slow, and then eased out of the blind, followed the blood trail a short distance and found the buck. I kneeled for a moment and admired the heavy-bodied whitetail. He had provided a thrilling hunt and plenty of venison for the freezer.

The hunt was satisfying for several reasons, including the way a new product had let me enjoy success. I had picked that food plot location a few years earlier because deer liked to mill around the area. They used my plots regularly, no matter what I planted. Unfortunately, I had not

fully considered how to approach the plot when I created it, as the best cover surrounding it was on the side where deer bedded and approached.

I had considered planting warm-season grasses or white pines on the open side to create a screen for cover so I could approach the blind undetected. However, before I had acted on those plans, I thought about Conceal, a new Whitetail Institute product designed to provide cover for just such a situation, among other uses.

"Conceal is designed to rapidly provide a thick screen, cover for food plots and bedding, hunter travel into stand locations or any other screening ideas a hunter can imagine," said William Cousins, general manager of the Whitetail Institute.

The product worked as advertised. I planted it following the instructions and watched it shoot up almost immediately. I put in a strip from a stand of red cedars leading to the edge of the plot, about 20 to 30 feet wide. I also left a small area open at the end of the strip where I could set up a portable blind before hunting season.

The Conceal seeds germinated in days, and the plants grew quickly. Before I knew it, the stand was tall enough to hide someone approaching the edge of the plot and also conceal the blind with its mixture of sunn hemp and proprietary sorghums. My plants didn't quite reach the 10- to 12-foot

height Conceal is capable of attaining in ideal conditions, but I'm shorter than 6 feet, so I didn't need maximum height to shield my entrance.

The setup was perfect, but I needed the right wind conditions to hunt the spot. Finally, a cool front and north-west wind let me make my move. Patience and Conceal paid off.

THE CONCEAL ADVANTAGE

Like many small-property owners who manage for deer, I realized early that habitat alterations and adding beneficial vegetation can help encourage deer to use my 117 acres more. And that's particularly true for older bucks.

Changes can include hinge-cutting, planting food plots, planting shrubs or trees for security and food, adding cover for animals to bed in, and providing cover to give animals security as they approach a feeding site. I've also used screens to shield the view of deer on my property from neighbors and a county road. The vegetation additions have also allowed undetected access to areas I wanted to hunt, including food plots, fruit trees or other food sources.

I've used native warm-season grasses such as switchgrass, Indian grass and bluestem for that. I've also planted conifers, including white pines. Although those remain in my arsenal of management tools, I've added Conceal, the dynamic new product from the Whitetail Institute. It's a great choice for landowners wanting to improve hunting success, keep more deer on the property and make deer feel secure (and thus more "killable").

Conceal contains forage and grain sorghums selected exclusively by the Whitetail Institute to provide tall ground cover that can perform many tasks. It also includes sunn hemp, which makes cover even thicker and provides more security for mature bucks.

"Sunn hemp is a legume that has soil-health benefits, grows rapidly and provides rigid plant structure to create tall, thick cover," Cousins said.

The sorghum family of plants is well known for growing swiftly and providing dense vegetation. Mixed with sunn hemp, they create a perfect combination for land management and deer hunting.

"Conceal is drought resistant and will



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

CONCEAL

• Designed to create thick cover, screens, funnels or other types of strategic plantings. Can grow 5-8 feet tall.

• Annual — Lasts up to 6 to 8 months

Optimum Growing Environment:

• Soil Type: Medium- to well-drained soils

• Soil pH: 6.0-7.5

• Sunlight: 6 hours of daily sunlight

• Best planted when soil temperatures reach 65 degrees



— 12 FEET IS POSSIBLE

Conceal can grow more than 8 feet under ideal conditions. In fact, 12 feet is possible.

actually grow well in sandy loamy soils to medium heavy soils," Cousins said. "A pH of 6 or above works fine."

Two of the most obvious uses for Conceal include creating cover to conceal a hunter approaching a stand and providing security for deer heading toward a food source through otherwise open terrain.

It can also be planted in strips or patches at strategic areas to entice mature bucks to stay on your property. Deer that stay on your property and feel secure are easier to kill and less likely to be shot by a neighbor when they're 1- or 2-year-olds. The sorghums establish rapidly and grow quickly. They're drought tolerant and can grow on fair- to medium-quality soils. Those traits make Conceal easy for even novice food plotters to grow. The quickness with which Conceal can be established is especially intriguing. You can use it to try various scenarios on a one-season basis to determine if you want to add more long-term cover, such as grasses or shrubs.

You can also use Conceal to create bedding cover and channel deer past your stand or blind. It can shield your plots from neighbors and adjoining roads from which people might see a big buck on your property. You can create a funnel to encourage deer to use a specific route by

planting a row along which deer will travel, leaving a small opening where you want it. Also, you can plant a strip of Conceal to connect bedding areas or channel travel between those areas, such as from mature woods through an open field to a cutover or orchard.

Mature bucks don't like to cross open areas in daylight. But if there's a strip of 8- to 12-foot-tall vegetation to shield them, they will. But, because you created that cover, you'll know where to locate stands depending on wind conditions and shooting lanes.

CONCLUSION

Conceal has many other uses (see the sidebar), but its basic functions were enough to make me order another supply for the upcoming season. It allows you to travel undetected, provides travel corridors and bedding cover, encourages deer to move more in daylight, and makes deer feel more secure and likely to stay on your land. It's also easy to grow and provides deer with a tasty snack on their way to food plots.

It's difficult to ask more from a product than that.

