



WE HAVE THE POWER
(PLANT)

This powerful blend lets you create feeding and bedding areas at the same site — a situation that can lead to great hunting opportunities.

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PHOTOS BY JASON SAY



Most deer hunters recognize that two prime features — food and cover — are centerpieces of a whitetail's life. Know what and where a buck eats and you're edging closer to arranging a meeting with him. Figure out where he feels safe to bed and, well, tagging that buck is just a matter of putting in the time and hunting intelligently.

But if you really want to create a whirlwind of whitetail opportunity, find a spot that combines those qualities. Some of the best hunting setups I've had occurred when those critical needs combined at the same place. A couple of examples:

* In the central and northern Wisconsin woods where I learned to hunt, not much could beat a young clearcut for attracting a mature buck. Young saplings sprouting in the aftermath of a pulp harvest created thick cover bucks loved for bedding and also provided browse that big woods bucks craved.

* The farm country where I currently live is a mosaic of standing cornfields that offer bucks secure bedding and a handy food source. Several early-season bucks I've hunted have spent significant portions of time barely straying from a cornfield that fed and hid them.

* One of my favorite annual trips is a bowhunt to the plains of Kansas, where

milo is a preferred deer food at a certain stage of maturity, and the dense stems form a bedding area beyond compare. Bucks can bed in milo, stand up and start snacking immediately.

The problem with those food/cover types is that the window to hunt them is often extremely narrow — and difficult. Although a good clearcut will last several seasons, standing corn and milo offer a whisker-thin time frame when they're most attractive to deer and available to hunters. Worse, because of crop rotation cycles, there's no guarantee the hot field you scored in the previous fall will be available the next.

I'm not sure if the folks at Whitetail Institute had those factors in mind when they created PowerPlant, but if they did, they deserve a deer hunting Mensa certification. Although the nutrient-rich food sources in PowerPlant feed whitetails for much of the year, other plant types form a towering cover source that deer use for bedding. Even better, a Power Plant plot can be manipulated to further increase food availability and hunting opportunity.

POWERPLANT BASICS

Designed for spring and summer plant-

— PROVIDE WHITETAILS SECURITY

PowerPlant produces several tons of highly attractive, highly nutritious forage even during the hot summer months. It also provides a great edge that enhances a whitetail's sense of security when feeding on nearby food sources.

ings in much of the country, PowerPlant is a unique blend. In addition to high-protein forage beans and peas, the blend includes sunn hemp and sunflowers.

"The beans and peas are a well-known high-protein food source that can handle some browsing," said William Cousins, general manager of the Whitetail Institute. "The sunn hemp combines with the sunflowers to provide additional food and also a tall lattice for the peas and beans to vine up. That creates structure and bedding cover for deer and other wildlife."

Cousins noted that PowerPlant is "a pretty forgiving mix."

"It does well in thin- to medium-heavy soils," he said. "We don't recommend sites where the soil stays wet and mucky, so lowland sites are generally not a good bet."

Naturally, proper soil prep is necessary for the best results, and applying lime to achieve a pH of 6.5 to 7.0 will ensure a healthy stand. For plots with grass problems, Cousins recommends one application of ArrestMax within a month or so of germination.

One requirement for success with PowerPlant is proper soil temperature.

"The biggest mistake people make is trying to get it in too early," Cousins said.



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL

POWERPLANT

- Includes sunn hemp, climbing forage peas, true forage-type vining soybeans and small amounts of sunflowers.
- Annual spring planting
- Up to 38% Protein

Optimum Growing Environment:

- Soil Type: Well-drained to medium soils
- Soil pH: 6.0-7.5
- ArrestMax herbicide approved
- Planted in spring and summer



— WARMED TO 65 DEGREES

This field of PowerPlant is off to a great start. Do not plant PowerPlant until the soil temperatures have warmed to 65 degrees or higher.

“The forage beans and peas need a minimum soil temp of 65 degrees to germinate properly. We tell guys to watch for farmers planting soybeans. Once you see those planters out, it’s OK to plant PowerPlant. This is a spring and summer planting, so the sooner it’s in, the better the growth, but warm soil is a must.”

In the lower Midwest, May 1 is a reasonable target date most years, with May 20 being the earliest recommended date in more northern climates. Southern managers should plan on an April planting.

Finally, Cousins warned that smaller plots are often not suitable for PowerPlant.

“While the forage beans and peas can certainly take browsing, they need to mature to that tri-foliolate stage before they can handle too much pressure from deer,” he said. “Generally, I like to tell people if they have a ¼-acre plot or smaller, it’s best to go with something else. My ideal plot for Power Plant is ¾-acre or larger.”

TWEAKING THE PLOT

Although the first hard frosts of fall will knock back production of the forage beans and peas, PowerPlant has more potential in the weeks and months ahead.

Naturally, the sunflowers and sunn hemp still provide the structure and security cover they always have, and with a little extra work, food production can continue.

“I’ve had great success coming back and discing lanes through PowerPlant and then putting in a fall planting,” Cousins said.

Imperial Winter-Greens, Beets & Greens, Pure Attraction or No-Plow are perfectly suited for planting in those tilled lanes.

Although obviously widening the window of feeding attraction, discing the lanes can also enhance hunting opportunity. Lanes can be created to funnel feeding deer toward stand and blind sites while keeping prevailing wind directions in mind. Lane width is a consideration when creating such a setup. It’s tempting to make the lanes wide to create more planting space, but widening them too much reduces the bedding attraction. Cousins recommended two to three disc widths, or 20 to 30 feet, as a good guideline.

Creating a one-two punch of bedding zone and feeding hotspot is likely to make a PowerPlant plot a desirable hunting loca-

tion. However, resist the urge to overhunt it, and always be mindful of wind direction,

as well as your approach to and exit from stand and blind sites. Whitetails — especially mature bucks — value safety above all else, and it makes no sense to jeopardize a killer food plot by overhunting it.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I’ve learned a lot from some expert mentors, and one lesson that has stuck with me came from a savvy land manager who said, “One of my goals is to shorten the distance a buck has to walk between bed and feed. I keep that in mind whenever I’m creating habitat or a food source.”

As I reflected on that advice, it reminded me of the many fine hunts I’d enjoyed in the habitat types mentioned at the beginning of this story. In each case, I’ve watched bucks rise from their beds, walk a few steps and begin eating. PowerPlant has that potential, with the added benefit that you don’t have to wait on a logger or farmer to create the situation.

The Power (Plant) is in your hands. Why not use it?

