



The author shows off one of his mature bucks shot using Imperial products.

PHOTO BY KRIS KLEMICK

WHAT SHOULD I PLANT?

The knowledge available through the Whitetail Institute's publications, consultants, weed scientists and agronomists is the best way to achieve masterful food plots.

■ by Kris Klemick

Walking the aisles at your favorite sporting goods store, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and confused by the number of food plot products. Between crazy claims — “Guaranteed to grow the biggest bucks!” — and paid celebrity endorsements, it's almost a roll of the dice whether your hard work and money will pay off at the end of the growing season. That's especially true if

you grab any seed and try to wing it.

With the Whitetail Institute of North America, building a successful food plot portfolio doesn't have to be a high-stakes risk. With the knowledge you'll gain reading *Whitetail News* and the decades of experience available via telephone from the Institute's professional in-house consultants, weed scientists and agronomists, you'll be on your way to masterful

food plots.

The Golden Rule, which has guided everything the Institute has done since Day 1, remains the same: treating others the way you'd want to be treated. Whitetail Institute products and services remain the gold standard by which others are measured. For someone looking to get started in food plots, the Whitetail Institute has you covered.



In the barren landscape of late fall and winter, Whitetail Institute products offer incredible attraction and nutrition.

GETTING STARTED: TWO TYPES OF PLOTS AND PLANTS

Understanding the differences between satellite plots and destination plots, and annual and perennial plants, might sound confusing, but it's simple.

Destination food plots are where deer feed, usually after dark. These often-expansive plots can be several acres or larger and produce substantial tonnage designed to hold deer on a property. Before deciding what to plant in a destination plot, consider the time and money you'll have to invest. There's more soil to maintain, which means more time in the field. Perennial crops can help reduce your workload and allow more time in the woods.

Satellite plots are smaller; usually less than an acre. These are desirable locations where people like to hunt during the first and last hours of daylight, when deer transition to bedding areas in the morning or destination plots at night. If you can place one near abundant cover and deer feel safe, about the only time you'll see a satellite plot without deer is if you've bumped them.

The types of seed you can plant fall into two basic categories: annuals and perennials. Both play important roles, and determining which to use depends on your goals. It's easy to confuse annuals with perennials. Annual picnics or parades happen every year, so you might think annual plants would come back, too. But when an annual event is finished, it's done. The next year is never guaranteed unless someone plans and executes the event — or in this case, plans and plants the field.

Annuals complete their life cycle in one year. The seed germinates, and the plant grows and dies the same year. You can plant annuals early in the growing season (spring or summer) or late (fall). The food plot, however, will not reproduce from the original stem the next year.

Perennials are the opposite. They live for more than two years and grow through much of the year, but when appropriately maintained, perennials can live for several years before dying. Imperial Whitetail Clover is an excellent example of a powerful perennial.

So how do perennial plants survive for several years while annuals must be replanted each year? Perennials use an asexual process called vegetative reproduction, or propagation, to reproduce. Perennials such as Imperial Alfa-Rack Plus have a deep, extensive root structure that lets them thrive and survive during summer droughts and cold winter months.

Perennials typically invest most of their resources during the first growing cycle into establishing roots. The nutrients required for healthy, productive growth are in the soil and cannot be ascertained by the naked eye. Too often, people grab a handful of dirt and think, "Now that's some good-looking soil." The importance of testing your soil to ensure proper nutrient and pH levels cannot be stressed enough. If soil pH isn't within an ideal range, micro- and macronutrients essential to plant health remain trapped at the molecular level. Poor soil conditions will negatively affect your food plot with stunted growth and wasted money on fertilizer. If you have proper soil conditions, though, the

root structure can establish quickly, allowing nutrient uptake and letting the plant flourish the next year versus

struggling to set roots during the second growing season.

Soil is always critical, and testing it is an integral part of food plot success. The Whitetail Institute offers professional laboratory soil testing, with results available quickly. It also provides specific and accurate fertilizer and lime recommendations for maximum performance. It's incredibly easy and probably costs less than your lunch did today.

DIVERSIFY

Now that you understand the differences between the types of plots and plants, how do you decide which seed to use and where to go with it? So many crop options exist, so how do you ensure you don't purchase a square peg meant for a round hole? Again, the Whitetail Institute has you covered. The product selector tool on the top of the page at whitetailinstitute.com is an excellent resource. Simply answer two or three questions about your planting situation, and the tool provides a selection of seeds that will perform best in your scenario.

The Whitetail Institute also offers an industry-leading service that's all but extinct nowadays. Dialing (800) 688-3030 will put you in touch with a professional in-house consultant who lives and breathes white-tailed deer. They devote as much time as required to ensure that your questions are answered. And the call and service are free.

The general rule, assuming you have sufficient acreage, is to plant 60 percent of your food plot acreage in a perennial crop, such as Imperial Whitetail Clover, Fusion or Chic Magnet. That will be your destination food source, where deer can consume high-quality forage for extended periods.

As the growing season wanes, perennial plants will begin slowing their growth in preparation for winter dormancy. That's where the remaining 40 percent of your food plot acreage comes into play. Early- and late-season annuals establish and grow quickly, providing high-quality food that's excellent for white-tailed

deer and hunting.

Annuals planted early in the season (spring and summer), such as PowerPlant, contain forages such as soybeans and peas designed to provide extremely high levels of protein and massive tonnage during the critical antler growing, fawning and lactating period.

Later-season annuals planted in fall — Pure Attraction, Winter Peas Plus or Whitetail Oats Plus — are scientifically designed to provide abundant levels of highly nutritious, high-sugar, drought- and cold-tolerant forage to carry deer through the stresses of the rut and winter.

For folks in the northern reaches of whitetail range, products such as Winter-Greens and Tall Tine Tubers stay true to their names. These unsurpassed annual blends of cool-season brassicas stand above the rest, remaining upright and green throughout the deepest of winter's cold and snow.



IMPERIAL WHITETAIL TALL TINE TUBERS

- Extremely cold tolerant — establishes early, and when the foliage is eaten, the large tubers will provide an additional food source for late winter.
- Exclusive turnip only available in Imperial products.
- Annual: Up to 36% protein.

Optimum Growing Environment:

- Soil Type: For medium-to well-drained soils
- Soil pH: 6.0 to 7.5
- Sunlight: 4 to 6 hours of of broken, filtered or direct sunlight a day



The beauty of brassicas is found beneath their highly attractive leafy tops. If your soil is properly managed and Mother Nature provides rain, you should begin noticing softball-sized turnips or radishes protruding from the ground. With frost-inducing temperatures, the starch in the turnips begins to sweeten, and deer go crazy digging through the snow in search of the sweet treat. They cannot resist the incredible attraction and nutrition in the Institute's brassicas.

GET OUT THERE AND PLANT

Gazing at the packaging on some

seeds, you might believe you've found a silver bullet for a one-size-fits-all food plot. Companies spend loads of money marketing products. Don't let packaging hype influence your buying decision.

The Whitetail Institute knows that every property owner has unique circumstances. That's why it spent years of research and testing on food plot products designed for its most important customer — white-tailed deer. Call on the company you can trust.



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