



TURNING
EQUIPMENT BLUES
INTO PLOTS OF GREEN



If you're thinking about upping your game and really putting high-quality forage on the table for deer, having the right equipment is as important as not going broke in the process.

■ *Text and Photos by
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As history shows, barriers are just objects — mostly tangible — placed in your way for mind or machine to overcome. We look objectively at problems and develop logical solutions to eliminate them. For example, in 1903, the Wright brothers solved the technology equation and flew, albeit only briefly. That first flight lasted just 12 seconds and traveled just 180 feet, but six decades later, we conquered another unknown: space travel. In 1969, we set foot on the moon. Bringing these examples down to ground level, we can see similar challenges still exist for mankind, though on a less significant scale.

Whitetail hunters love all things deer. The fact you have this magazine in your hands is a testament to your unwavering commitment to and successful pursuit of white-tailed deer. We know that food plots are a fundamental part to land management and overall habitat improvement. However, the ability to provide deer with abundant sources of high-quality food is often limited by access to the right equipment. That's another fantastic barrier, but fear not. Although countless successful food plots are planted each year with nothing more than a few hand tools and a healthy dose of elbow grease, (been there, done that and still have the aches and pains to prove it), to place significant tonnage across the landscape and save your body and sanity, you must have the right tools.

Fortunately, you don't need a second



**A DISK HARROW BREAKS UP AND
INCORPORATES EXISTING VEGETATION,
LIME AND FERTILIZER INTO THE SOIL.**

mortgage to make it happen. Getting your hands on the right equipment isn't nearly as difficult or expensive as you might think.

Second- and even third- or fourth-hand farming essentials can be the answer to your troubles. You just have to know where to look.

SOURCING EQUIPMENT

Local newspapers, penny-savers or weekly savings guide-type mailings are great for discovering upcoming public auctions where you can obtain used equipment. Websites such as Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace are also great resources. In 1990, when my uncle received mailings from the Whitetail Institute announcing the availability of Imperial Whitetail clover, he decided he was going all in. He recognized that he needed a small to medium-sized tractor to plant 3 or 4 acres and do it as efficiently as possible. A few months later, I was at an auction, cheering him on as he acquired a tractor and some equipment for dimes on the dollar. The disk, three-bottom plow and cultipacker were ancient but able, and were essentially being sold for scrap. But my uncle saw their value, so he was sure to have his hand in the air before the hammer dropped on each. And here we are more than 30 years later, with each one of those pieces of equipment still working hard each year in the field.



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FIND MY STORE

Another way of course, is the tried-and-true boots on the ground door knockin' method. Travel the backroads through your local farming community and you might be surprised to realize the number of farms where old relics have been cast to the end of a field. Farmers count on their equipment to make a living, and through the years as yields have increased, so has the need for larger, more efficient equipment. It isn't unheard of for those older, smaller pieces that are perfect for food plots to be on the market — if only you'd ask. Farmers are salt-of-the-earth people and though they might curse deer for damaging their crops, they recognize when someone takes an interest in cultivating the land. You'd be surprised just how favorably some used equipment can make its way into your fields thanks to a friendly farmer.

TOOLS IN THE SHED

All you really need to get started are three things: a disk, cultipacker and something to pull them. A disk harrow

is used to break up and incorporate existing vegetation, lime and fertilizer into the soil. Comprised of individual smooth or notched concave metal disks (think pizza cutters), each set of disks make up what's called a gang. A disk harrow can be as small as a four-wheeler (typically one to four gangs) to as large as a full-size truck or bigger. More disks equal more ground that can be covered and less time, making multiple passes to break down clumps of soil to a manageable size for the next piece of equipment you'll want to consider.

A cultipacker is also an important implement. After your soil has been disked, this would-be giant rolling pin, comprised of a series of ridged metal wheels stacked together running the length of the axle, helps crush small clumps of soil, eliminate pockets of air under the surface and help firm up the seedbed, which is crucial for many small seed food plot forages. If a cultipacker isn't available, any weighted drag will do, such as a piece of unrolled metal fencing with cinder blocks

strapped to it. A medium-diameter tree or part of an old telephone pole with heavy bolts and cables also makes for a great substitute.

Finally, you must decide whether you intend to use the horsepower at your disposal, whether it's a rototiller and lawn tractor pulling the lawn roller, a four-wheeler and its appreciably sized disc and drag, or a small or medium-sized farm tractor. Don't be afraid to start small, and like the farmers mentioned earlier, as the acreage you plant begins to increase each year, so can the size of your equipment.

TIME TO PLANT

Now that you're equipped with some knowledge, resources and a case study, it's time to get out there and turn that equipment blues barrier into lush food plots of green without spending a ton of greenbacks in the process.



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