



THE BEST PLOT SHAPES FOR TOP- PIN BOW SHOTS



■ Failing to properly plan your food plot shape can result in missed chances and poor opportunities. Go with a proven layout to facilitate better shots.

Your plot's layout largely influences deer movement. Try one of these configurations for a slam-dunk archery opportunity.

■ by *Darron McDougal*

Imagine this: You worked meticulously to cultivate a food plot in an excellent hunting location during spring or summer. In the weeks before the archery opener, a couple of really big bucks begin hitting your plot every afternoon like clockwork. The season opens, and you just need the wind to cooperate so you can hunt them. It'll be perfect in two days.

The big day finally arrives, and your enthusiasm surges as you hike in to hunt after a refreshing scent-free shower. You reach your stand, climb up and settle in. It's a beautiful fall afternoon, and you're on the edge of your seat with anticipation. A half-hour before dark, there they are: the two bruiser bucks that have consumed your thoughts for at least a month.

They enter the plot 70 yards away and graze on the luscious carpet of Imperial Whitetail Clover. Your heart slams inside your chest, but the bucks aren't coming closer. Suddenly, you glance at your phone and realize legal shooting hours have ended. Bummer. Now you have to figure out how to climb down and leave. Spooking the bucks is practically inevitable. What's more, your chances of seeing them again at this plot are slim to none.

That scenario repeats itself constantly across whitetail country. Many deer hunters take the time to plant food for deer — sometimes a lot of it. And although food is extremely important in attracting deer to your hunting property, presentation is just as important if you're a bowhunter. Here, we'll discuss a few plot shapes that will likely direct deer by your stand at broadside at 20 to 25 yards.



FREE E-NEWSLETTER!
BREAKING GROUND



www.whitetailinstitute.com
239 Whitetail Trail, Pintlala, AL 36043

HOURGLASS

An hourglass-shaped plot is best positioned in the middle of switchgrass or timber, and the design encourages deer to enter the plot on one end and then pinch through the narrow middle en route to the opposite end. The ends can be fairly long, like a tube shape or even large circles, but the key is to design it so the middle pinches down to 20 to 25 yards. Position a tree stand or blind on either side of the skinny funnel so you can hunt various winds.

If you're hunting during the rut, that pinch is a great place to set a subordinate buck decoy, as it will be visible from both ends of the plot. Then, if you grunt to a buck, the decoy provides a visual aid to make your grunt credible, and if the buck is in the mood, he'll come in.

CHEVRON

This essentially V-shaped plot can be effective when placed between a bedding area and destination food source. Design it so the point faces away from the bedding area and toward the destination food. This coaxes deer into feeding along one of two thoroughfares, giving them options. Still, both converge at the point. Make the lanes no wider than 20 to 25 yards. Place your stand or blind on the inner point, and make sure you can cover both lanes. Hunt it with the wind blowing toward the point.

HORSESHOE

The goal with this shape is to have bucks enter from one end or the other and then feed toward the bottom of the U. Or, when bucks begin cruising and scent-checking, they might travel from one end to the other. If there's timber or switchgrass on the horseshoe's inside edges, bucks will have to wrap around and walk by your stand to see any does feeding on the opposite end.

It's also a deadly setup for laying down a fresh doe-estrus scent trail. Drag a soaked rag from one end around to the other. Bucks entering on either end can pick up the trail and should cruise it right by your stand. I'd have a stand or blind on the inside and outside edges of the U to have more flexibility with the wind, and I'd make the bottom of the horseshoe 25 yards wide or less.

WINE BOTTLE

Whether it's a larger destination plot or a smaller secluded timber plot, design this plot with the bottleneck aimed at a perceived primary bedding area. Make the bottleneck no wider than 20 to 25 yards across. Position stands or blinds on both sides of the bottleneck (again, for various winds) right where it widens out to the bottle portion. This will yield slam-dunk shots in most cases. Bucks entering the plot in the bottleneck and heading for the plot's larger bottle portion should walk down the pipe at 25 yards or closer and broadside, if not slightly quartering away, as they pass.

PLOTMASTER™
THE ULTIMATE PLOT PLANTING MACHINE

Plants ALL types of seed
Including Seed Blends!!!

DISC, PLOW,
PLANT, COVER
AND CULTI-PACK
"ALL-IN-ONE"

3 FT. / 4 FT. / 6 FT. / 8 FT.
ATV & Tractor Models Available!

888-MAX-GAME
www.theplotmaster.com

FREE
HOW-TO DVD

TRICK IT OUT

The plot shapes discussed previously are ideal in conjunction with extra points of interest. What am I getting at? Think about things that provide additional allure right where you want a buck to offer a shot. What will give a buck more reasons to use the plot shape as intended and then stop broadside at 25 yards or closer without a mouth-grunt? Here are some ideas.

Paw out a big mock scrape, and douse it with buck urine or a scrape-specific scent blend (check your state's regulations). No licking branch nearby? Suspend a hemp rope from a limb higher up, and let it dangle above the scrape. Or bury a cedar post into the ground for bucks to rub with their antlers and scent glands. These are visual signposts deer use to communicate, and bucks are likely to visit them each time they're in the plot. It's another reason for bucks to use the plot as you want them to, and it's a visual distraction that can take the buck's focus away from you — and make him stop — as you position for a shot and draw your bow.

A small water hole is another idea. It adds a necessity, and putting it 20 yards

away where you want deer to pass will make most stop and drink before moving on, giving you more time to settle your top pin and make your shot. The most effective shapes for incorporating an oasis are probably the hourglass and wine bottle.

GET IT RIGHT

Before you start with any of those plot shapes, download a map-based hunting app such as PlotPerfection. If you've located buck bedding areas in the past while scouting, drop pins on them. Then consider any other food sources — don't forget hard and soft mast — on your property and adjacent properties. Use common sense and past hunting knowledge to predict deer movement patterns. Then, with the satellite overview in your palm, imagine how you can incorporate one of the aforementioned plot shapes into that pattern to generate an easy shot opportunity.

Speaking of mast crops, if you can design your plot with fruit-bearing trees or acorn-producing oaks dropping goodies into the plot 20 to 25 yards from your stand or blind, all the better.

WORK SMARTER

Obviously, creating a specific plot shape can be a lot of work. It might involve clearing a lot of trees, brush and other various obstructions. If it's a bigger job than you want or can undertake, look at existing openings, trails and roads in the vicinity. See if you can somehow start your plot shape with what's already cleared, and then clear out some more to achieve your desired final shape.

THE CLOSER. THE BETTER

I don't know about you, but I'd rather shoot a buck at 15 yards than at 35. The closer the better. A shot opportunity at a big buck is intense enough without needlessly adding yardage. Of course, a lack of planning with plot layout can yield an outcome like the example at the beginning of the article. If you don't want to face a long shot or miss your opportunity, choose a proven plot shape to get a top-pin shot at your dream buck.



Get the Right Equipment for Your Plot

Lime Spreaders & Tilling Machines



- spread pulverized or pelletized lime
- ground driven system dispenses evenly
- made of heavy gauge sheet metal
- heavy duty tires and wheels
- three models — 500 lb to 2000 lb.
- tractor and ATV models



- excellent ground preparation implement
- quickly tears up old growth and creates the best seedbed for food plots
- strong steel frame with many options
- change angle of disc blades easily
- tractor and ATV models


GroundBuster
"Making it Greener on Your Side"

JR Metal: GroundBusters • www.groundbusters.com
52 Hess Road, Leola, PA 17540 • (717) 656-6241

Call today and learn how our equipment can save time and money!