

FOOD PLOTS: COMMON PLANTS

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INTRODUCTION

Food plots are widely used by landowners to improve wildlife habitat. Food plots can be used to attract animals for harvest or viewing. Annual food plots are expensive to establish and maintain but perennial food plots may be less costly. In general, food plots are an expensive attempt to improve wildlife habitat. Food plots have little or no wildlife value if food plots are established at the expense of maintaining cover. Wildlife needs both adequate food and cover within a reasonable distance of each other.

In general, food plots should be linear and 1 to 2 acres in size. In order to have a significant impact on wildlife habitat, 10 % of the land area should be maintained in food plots. Rarely can a landowner afford to dedicate this much land to food plots. Remember that even a few properly placed and properly maintained food plots can improve wildlife habitat. Food plots should be integrated into a broad plan to improve and maintain suitable wildlife habitat.

GENERAL TIPS FOR FOOD PLOT ESTABLISHMENT

1 – Most woodland soils in our area are low in phosphorus and tend to be acidic. Always get a soil test and follow the recommendations for applying lime and fertilizer. Your local County Extension Office can provide information on taking a soil sample.

2 – Prepare the soil by plowing or disking and smoothing the seedbed.

3 – Seeding can be done by hand or with broadcast equipment. Seed should be covered lightly (1/4 to 1/2 inch in most cases).

4 – Food plots should be long and narrow with some curves or bends to give wildlife a sense of security. A rule of thumb is 1 acre of food plot for every 10 acres of habitat. Plot width should be between 75 and 150 feet. A rule of thumb is 2-3 times wider than the height of the adjacent trees.

5 – Avoid dry ridges or rocky soil. Avoid dry southern or southwestern exposures. Northern exposure is good but too much shade will not allow your food plants to grow and will tend to be too cool in winter. A minimum of 50% sunshine is recommended. Locate the food plot near adequate escape or roosting cover or construct cover if it is lacking. Seek advice from the extension office or a consultant.

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6 – Insure that the food plots are producing a crop year round. Several varieties – planted in strips or sections of the plot – will help. Perennial food plots are less expensive to maintain than annual plots.

7 – Consider providing water in inexpensive troughs near the food plot if it is not available from natural sources.

8 – Keep records of planting dates, seeding rates, lime and fertilizer applications and wildlife production. This will help locate productive areas and eliminate spending effort on unproductive areas. Also, these records will help determine causes of food plot failure and direct recommendations for improvement.

GENERAL PLANT RECOMMENDATIONS

These plants are commonly grown in food plots in Georgia and the southeast. Check with your Wildlife Specialist or County Extension Agent for additional information on uses of these plants in wildlife food plots.

White-tailed Deer				
Plant Name	Animals	Type	Rate	Planting Season
Black Sunflower	Deer	A	40	Spring/Summer
Buckwheat	Deer	AG	50	Spring/Summer
Millet, Brown Top	Deer	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Aeschynomene - Deer Vetch	Deer	AL	20	Spring/Summer
Clover, Alyce	Deer	AL	20	Spring/Summer
Clover, Crimson	Deer	AL	25	Winter
Clover, Subterranean	Deer	AL	20	Winter
Peas	Deer	AL	60	Spring/Summer
Soybean	Deer	AL	60	Spring/Summer
Vetch, Hairy	Deer	AL	60	Winter
Winter Rye	Deer	AL	150	Winter
Chufas	Deer	AS	30	Spring/Summer
Alfalfa	Deer	PL	20	Winter
Birdsfoot Trefoil	Deer	PL	10	Winter
Brome	Deer	PL	35	Winter
Clover, Arrowleaf	Deer	PL	8	Winter
Clover, Red	Deer	PL	10,15	Winter
Clover, White(Landino)	Deer	PL	8	Winter
Crown Vetch	Deer	PL	20	Spring/Summer
Lespedeza, Sericea	Deer	PL	31	Spring/Summer

Doves, Ducks, Hogs, Pheasant				
Plant Name	Animals	Type	Rate	Planting Season
Black Sunflower	Dove	A	40	Spring/Summer
Buckwheat	Dove	AG	50	Spring/Summer
Millet, Brown Top	Dove	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Millet, Japanese	Dove	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Millet, Proso	Dove	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Aeschynomene - Deer Vetch	Dove	AL	20	Spring/Summer
Partridge Pea	Dove	AL	15	Spring/Summer
Crown Vetch	Dove	PL	20	Spring/Summer
Buckwheat	Ducks	AG	50	Spring/Summer
Millet, Brown Top	Ducks	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Millet, Japanese	Ducks	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Millet, Proso	Ducks	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Aeschynomene - Deer Vetch	Ducks	AL	20	Spring/Summer
Sesbania	Ducks	AL	25	Spring/Summer
Chufas	Hogs	AS	30	Spring/Summer
Black Sunflower	Pheasant	A	40	Spring/Summer
Buckwheat	Pheasant	AG	50	Spring/Summer

Rabbit, Turkey				
Plant Name	Animals	Type	Rate	Plant
Clover, Crimson	Rabbit	AL	25	Winter
Clover, Subterranean	Rabbit	AL	20	Winter
Winter Rye	Rabbit	AL	150	Winter
Birdsfoot Trefoil	Rabbit	PL	10	Winter
Clover, Arrowleaf	Rabbit	PL	8	Winter
Clover, Red	Rabbit	PL	10,15	Winter
Clover, White (Landino)	Rabbit	PL	8	Winter
Black Sunflower	Turkey	A	40	Spring/Summer
Buckwheat	Turkey	AG	50	Spring/Summer
Alyce Clover	Turkey	AL	20	Spring/Summer
Clover, Subterranean	Turkey	AL	20	Winter
Clover, Crimson	Turkey	AL	25	Winter
Winter Rye	Turkey	AL	150	Winter
Chufas	Turkey	AS	30	Spring/Summer
BahiaGrass	Turkey	PG	20	Spring/Summer
Alfalfa	Turkey	PL	20	Winter
Birdsfoot Trefoil	Turkey	PL	10	Winter
Clover, Arrowleaf	Turkey	PL	8	Winter
Clover, Red	Turkey	PL	10,15	Winter
Clover, White(Landino)	Turkey	PL	8	Winter
Lespedeza, Bicolor	Turkey	PS	10	Spring/Summer

Northern Bobwhite Quail				
Plant Name	Animals	Type	Rate	Planting Season
Black Sunflower	Quail	A	40	Spring/Summer
Buckwheat	Quail	AG	50	Spring/Summer
Egyptian Wheat-Grain Sorghum	Quail	AG	10	Spring/Summer
Millet, Brown Top	Quail	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Millet, Japanese	Quail	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Millet, Proso	Quail	AG	40	Spring/Summer
Sesame	Quail	AH	6	Spring/Summer
Aeschynomene - Deer Vetch	Quail	AL	20	Spring/Summer
Lespedeza, Kobe/Korean	Quail	AL	30	Spring/Summer
Partridge Pea	Quail	AL	15	Spring/Summer
Peas	Quail	AL	60	Spring/Summer
Sesbania	Quail	AL	25	Spring/Summer
Soybean	Quail	AL	60	Spring/Summer
Alfalfa	Quail	PL	20	Winter
Crown Vetch	Quail	PL	20	Spring/Summer
Lespedeza, Sericea	Quail	PL	31	Spring/Summer
Lupine, Blue	Quail	PL	60	Winter
Lespedeza, Bicolor	Quail	PS	10	Spring/Summer
Rate = pounds of seed per acre				
Type				
A = Annual				
AG = Annual Grass				
AH = Annual Herb				
AL = Annual Legume				
AS = Annual Shrub				
PG = Perennial Grass				
PL = Perennial Legume				
PS = Perennial Shrub				

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