

How to Grow Quality Deer Food Plots by Marty Prokop

Three people this week have asked, “Marty, I want to put in a **food plot** to attract more deer for next **deer hunting** season, what are the best **food plot** seeds to plant for my area?”

This is a great question.

To see more deer and fill more tags next **deer hunting** season, start preparing your deer hunting land now.

Deer have three main requirements: food, water and safe places to bed down.

Let’s focus on food and **food plots**.

There is no “one” **food plot** seed answer for all areas. There are different food plot seed blends for different soil types.

Climate can affect seed and vegetation growth. And deer in southern areas may be accustomed to different vegetation than deer in the north. What I might plant in my Wisconsin food plot might not work in a Louisiana food plot.

5 Food Plot Steps to Attract and Keep Deer on Your Deer Hunting Land

Always check with your local state wildlife management office or department of natural resources for state and local laws and regulations regarding planting deer food plots.

If you are hunting on private land make sure to check with the landowner for permission to create a food plot.

Marty Prokop Deer Food Plot Step One: Deer Food Plots for Hunting

I am assuming your hunting area has a deer population and your goal is to bring those deer to a central location.

How do you decide where you plant your **deer food plot**?

First, evaluate your land in terms of how many acres you have, the current timber to field ratio and the natural flow of deer traffic.

If you already have open fields on your **deer hunting** land, you may decide to plant these openings. Even though these are cleared for planting, identify the highest deer traffic areas so you know where to concentrate your planting efforts.

You may have land with no clearings or you want to clear high deer traffic areas for deer food plots.

How do you decide where to clear?

Here's one answer.

Find an area where multiple trails from various directions come together at one point. At this converging point, clear a 10 to 20 foot circle. From the circle, clear four trails going out four ways that are three to five feet wide and 20 to 50 yards long. You would be making a cross with a large circle in the middle.

Plant the circle and the four incoming trails as food plots. Yes, the circle and the trails you have made.

Put up four **deer hunting tree stands** around the edge of the circle. The reason you want four deer hunting tree stands is so you can hunt in various wind directions without spooking the deer.

Once your food plots have grown, the deer will walk their natural trails and come upon your planted food plot trails. They will graze and follow these trails into the center circle food plot. You have created a funnel.

During deer season, you will be in your deer hunting tree stand and may be presented with perfect shots.

Marty Prokop Deer Food Plot Step Two: Sanctuary Deer Food Plots

If you have enough land, plant food plots that will not be hunted. Non-hunted food plot sanctuaries attract and hold deer on your land by supplying food and safety.

Here is what I do.

I have 120-acres to hunt. Forty acres is never hunted. This self-designated wildlife sanctuary is comprised of 20-acres of crop land and a 5-acre pond. The balance is a large tag alder swamp.

The reason I created this non-hunted sanctuary?

First, it holds deer on my land.

Secondly, as the areas around my land receive increased deer hunting pressure, the deer gravitate to the sanctuary. On their way to the sanctuary, these deer pass through the areas in which I have **deer hunting tree stands**. This increases deer traffic in my hunting areas.

Decide if you want a non-hunted deer food plot sanctuary.

Marty Prokop Deer Food Plot Step Three: Food Plot Soil Sample

You may have a single deer food plot or multiple deer food plots to sample. Food plot soil sampling is important for maximum vegetation growth and yield. The results from a food plot soil sample will answer:

1. What is the pH of your soil?
2. What are the principle nutrients in your soil?
3. How much and what kind of lime does your soil need?
4. Which nutrients need to be added to your soil as fertilizer?
5. How much fertilizer is needed for your crop and soil?

A food plot soil test will not:

1. Prevent poor crops caused by drought, disease, insects, too much water, etc.
2. Be a substitute for good growing practices.
3. Tell you which crop to grow. You will go to the seed company with your food plot soil sample results. The seed company will be able to help you select the best seed.

Many seed companies offer food plot soil testing. Some seed companies have directions on how to collect and send in a food plot soil sample.

The soil from your **deer food plot** can also be tested by your local extension service or county agriculture service.

If you are planting deer food plots in multiple fields or areas that are not adjoined, take a soil sample from each area.

When you conduct a **deer food plot** soil test, avoid soil from unusual areas. Do not collect soil from wet spots, feeding areas, burn piles, old fence rows or sand boils. Collect your deer food plot sample from the average soil of the field or area.

If it is winter and your deer food plot soil is frozen, you will collect your food plot soil samples in the spring.

Marty Prokop Deer Food Plot Step Four: Choose the Best Seed and Soil Supplements for Your Deer Food Plot

Your soil test results are back.

Call the seed company of your choice with your food plot soil results in hand. Talk to the representative about the seed blends which would grow best in your climate and with your soil conditions. Choose and purchase the seed for your deer food plot.

Ask your seed company representative if soil supplements you need are to be added before planting the seeds or if they can be mixed with the seeds and placed in your food plot in one step.

Purchase soil supplements, such as fertilizers or lime, if they are needed. You can get these at local feed mills or farm supply stores.

Marty Prokop Food Plot Step Five: Plant Your Deer Food Plot

Decide if you are mixing seed and soil supplements or if you are working the soil supplements separately from seed planting.

Do you have the equipment to plant your deer food plot?

If not, see if you can find a local farmer who can help you. You can talk to neighboring farmers to see their availability and what they would charge.

You can also go to the local feed mill or farm coop and ask for custom tilling services.

If you have an ATV or tractor you could go to your local equipment rental store and ask about renting food plot tilling and planting equipment.

If you can't find a farmer to help, custom tilling is not available and you can't find the equipment to rent, ask the seed company if they offer a no-till seed blend. These no-till blends can be placed onto ground that has been cleared of weeds and vegetation. Ask the manufacturer if the ground for these seeds could be worked with a rake.

Follow seed manufacturer's planting recommendations of whatever seed you choose. If you have questions talk to your seed company or the local agriculture extension office.

When deer hunting season comes, you are ready.

The Time is Now...

Now is the perfect time to start planning your deer food plot. I don't think there is any bad time to start planning. Even if you start thinking about a deer food plot in the middle of deer hunting season, you can take action at any time to start planning a great deer food plot for next season.

Good Luck and Great Hunting!

Marty Prokop

www.free-deer-hunting-tips.com