6 Wildlife food plot... establishing a variety of plants that furnish food for wildlife.

How it works

Food plots may be established either within an existing crop field or in a separate location. You may simply leave four rows of corn standing after harvest to provide food for wildlife over the winter. Or you may plant a small plot elsewhere. These plots help wildlife through the winter when food supplies are in short supply.

How it helps

- Standing crops with unharvested grain give food to wildlife that may otherwise not be accessible after heavy snows or ice.
- A food plot helps maintain wildlife on your farm by providing food.

Planning ahead

- Will the crop you plan to plant or leave standing in the field attract the wildlife you want?
- Is there adequate cover and water near the food plot to support wildlife?
- Are you endangering wildlife by placing the food plot too close to high traffic areas?

Tech notes

- Planting dates range from March 1 to June 15 depending on the crop.
- Food plots should be planted on the least erosive areas of the selected field.
- Fall seedbed preparation is not allowed.
- Plots on slopes steeper than 5% must be planted on the contour.
- A plot can be planted on the same area each year as long as soil loss does not exceed acceptable limits.
- Accepted crops include: corn, sorghum, oats, barley, wheat, sunflower, buckwheat, millet, partridge pea and soybeans.
- Soybeans and sunflowers can not be used in Conservation Reserve Program food plots.
- Reduced till or no-till planting is encouraged.

Maintenance

- Exclude livestock.
- Don't control weeds with herbicides unless noxious weeds persist. If herbicides are needed, spot spray. Avoid using herbicides that would endanger adjacent seedings.

7

Filter strip... a strip of grass, trees or shrubs that filters runoff and removes contaminants before they reach water bodies or water sources such as wells.

How it works

Strips of grass, trees and/or shrubs slow water flow and cause contaminants like sediment, chemicals and nutrients to collect in vegetation. Collected nutrients and chemicals are used by the vegetation, rather than entering water supplies. Filtered water then enters water bodies.

How it helps

- Grass, trees and shrubs provide cover for small birds and animals.
- Ground cover reduces soil erosion.
- The vegetative strip moves rowcrop operations farther from a stream.
- Vegetation prevents contaminants from entering water bodies, protecting water quality.

Planning ahead

- Are adequate soil conservation measures installed above filter strips?
- Are plants adapted to your soil types?
- Have you selected the correct species of vegetation for the control you need? For example, are you establishing the filter strip around a sinkhole, to control runoff from a feedlot or to filter runoff from cropland?

Tech notes

- Filter strips are most effective on slopes of 5% or less.
- Filter strips for cropland must be at least 15 feet wide. Steeper slopes require wider strips.

% Slope	Minimum width
0-10	15 feet
10-20	20 feet
20-30	25 feet

- A minimum 50 foot width is required for filter strips on forest land.
- Do not use a filter strip as a roadway.
- Filter strips will be less effective under snow or during frozen conditions.
- Avoid drift when applying herbicides on surrounding cropland.
- Controlled grazing may be allowed if filter strips are dry and firm.

Maintenance

- Repair rills and small channels that may have developed.
- Control grazing if livestock have access to filter strips.

8 Grade control structure... earthen, wooden, concrete or other structure built across a drainageway to prevent gully erosion.

How it works

A dam, embankment or other structure built across a grassed waterway or existing gully controls and reduces water flow. The structure drops water from one stabilized grade to another and prevents overfall gullies from advancing up a slope.

How it helps

- Grade control structures are often used at the outlet of a grassed waterway to stabilize the waterway outlet, preventing gully erosion.
- Grassed, non-eroding waterways made possible with a grade control structure give better water quality, can be crossed with equipment, and look better than non-stabilized gullies.
- If it is planned to store water, a grade control structure may provide a water source and habitat for wildlife.

Planning ahead

- Are adequate conservation practices installed above the structure to prevent sedimentation?
- Is the planned location in the proper place to achieve the level of control you want?

Tech notes

- Ask NRCS for design and construction specifications.
- Obtain any necessary easements or permits.
- Remove all trees and shrubs within 30 feet of the structure.
- Clear debris approximately 50 feet downstream from the spillway outlet.

Maintenance

- Keep burrowing animals off of earthen structures.
- Repair any cracks in concrete.
- Keep outlets free of debris.

9 Critical area planting... planting grass or other vegetation to protect a badly eroding area from soil erosion.

How it works

Grass, legumes, trees or shrubs are established in small, isolated areas of excessive erosion. The vegetation provides surface cover to stop the raindrop splash and slow water flow.

How it helps

- It reduces soil erosion.
- A vegetated area improves water quality by reducing the amount of sediment, nutrients and chemicals running off farmland.
- Protects areas such as dams, terrace backslopes or gullied areas when vegetation may be difficult to establish.
- Vegetation can be planted to provide small areas of nesting cover for birds and small animals.

Planning ahead

- Will protection provided by the critical area planting be adequate?
- Are proper soil conservation practices installed above the planting area?
- Will you want to provide wildlife cover?
- Can the area be stabilized with other conservation methods?

Tech notes

- Protect the area from erosion with annual grasses until permanent cover is established.
- Apply lime and fertilizer, if needed, in the top three inches of the soil before planting.
- Use proper rates and recommended seeding dates.
- Severely eroded areas may need a nurse crop like oats. Seed oats at a rate of 1 to 1½ bushels per acre. Mow oats before they head out if possible. Mow high to avoid clipping the permanent seeding.
- Areas disturbed during construction or barren slopes 4:1 or steeper should be mulched to provide temporary protection before seeding.
- Mulches include grass, hay, grain straw and shredded cornstalks.

Maintenance

- Allow no grazing the year after planting and prevent overgrazing after permanent cover is established. Fence if needed.
- Permanently exclude livestock from extremely steep slopes.
- Native or warm season grasses can benefit from periodic burning, which stimulates growth by reducing and removing competing plant growth.