

Food Plots for Deer in Central Texas (25 – 30 Inch Rainfall Belt)

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On soils where dryland farming is successful, the growing of food plots for deer is a viable alternative for increasing the deer food supply. There are three basic types of deer food plots:

Cool Season Annual Food Plot Planted annually in fall; provides forage during late fall, winter and early spring.

- **Wheat** The easiest and most reliable winter food plot is wheat planted at about 60 lbs/acre.
- **Wheat and Oats** Another good option is to plant a mixture of wheat and oats, each at 30 lbs/acre. Deer generally prefer oats, but wheat is more cold tolerant and drought hardy. These small grains will cease to provide quality forage sometime in March as they mature.
- **Small Grain and Winter Legumes** To extend the season of quality forage availability, a 50:50 mix of small grain (wheat or oats) and broadleaf legumes and forbs can be planted. The mix below can be used as an example of such a combination plot.

Wheat	15 lbs/ac
Oats	15 lbs/ac
Hairy vetch	3 lbs/ac
Austrian winterpea	3 lbs/ac
White sweetclover	0.5 lb/ac
Yellow sweetclover	0.5 lb/ac
Turnips	0.5 lb/ac

Warm Season Annual Food Plot Planted annually in spring; provides forage during late spring, summer and early fall.

- **Lablab** Possibly the most reliable and productive type of summer food plot is a tropical legume called Lablab. This plant is closely related to the ornamental garden plant called hyacinth bean. Plant lablab at about 15 pounds per acre, preferably in rows. It is able to withstand summer heat and drought better than other legumes.
- **Cowpeas** Another option is to plant cowpeas or a variety of various types of summer peas or beans such as Iron and Clay; Catjang; Red Ripper; Turkey pea; Combine cowpeas; Mungbeans. Whether you use a single type of cowpea or a combination, the total seeding rate of these should be about 20 lbs/ac.
- **Grain Sorghum** Although it does not provide the same high value forage as lablab or cowpeas, grain sorghum is a drought tolerant crop which does provide high energy food when the seedhead is consumed in late summer. The typical red-seeded varieties are high in tannin and not as palatable until maturity. A combination of white-seeded (low tannin) and red-seeded sorghum can be used to provide both early and late food value. Plant grain sorghum at about 12 lbs/acre.

Perennial Food Plot A combination of perennial forbs can be seeded together to provide yearlong forage. Plant in December – March. Be patient – perennials are slow to establish and cannot tolerate heavy grazing by deer or livestock during the first year.

Engelmann daisy	2 – 4 lb/ac
Bush sunflower	0.5 – 1 lb/ac
Maximilian sunflower	0.5 – 1 lb/ac
Illinois bundleflower	2 – 4 lb/ac
Alfalfa	1 – 2 lb/ac

General Guidelines:

- Plots should be fenced to exclude or manage livestock grazing
- Plots may need to be high fenced to control deer use
- Food plots should be planted at 0.4 acres per deer, or 40 acres per 100 deer
- Fertilize if needed for adequate production according to a current soil test
- Control weeds in summer food plots to enhance establishment and production
- Double cropping will reduce yield and increase risk of food plot failure