

Checklist and Value of Common Deer Food Plants of the Edwards Plateau

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Class I Browse Plants				
Kidneywood	Spanish oak *	Texas mulberry	White honeysuckle	Littleleaf leadtree
Carolina buckthorn	Mountain mahogany	Rusty blackhaw	Texas sophora	Inland ceanothus
Shrubby boneset	Hawthorne	Possumhaw	Mistletoe	Trumpet vine
Elms				
Class II Browse Plants				
Hackberry +	Netleaf forestiera	Elbowbush -	Ephedra	Dewberry *
Roemer acacia	Western soapberry- *	Grapevine *	Bumelia	Redbud
Virginia creeper	Old mans's beard	Greenbriar	Wild plum *	Black cherry
Carolina snailseed	Black willow	Blackjack oak *	SW bernardia	Roughleaf dogwood *
Huisache *				Fourwing saltbush
Class III Browse Plants				
Live oak *	Flameleaf sumac+*	Littleleaf sumac *	Button bush	Hogplum
Shin oaks *+*	Skunkbush sumac *	Feather dalea	Silktassel	Prairie baccharis
Post oak *	Evergreen sumac *	Ivy treebine	Bush croton	Peachbrush
Black dalea	Poison ivy			Sycamore
Class IV Browse Plants				
Redberry cedar *	Algerita	Mesquite *	Lotebush	Condalia
Blueberry cedar *	Persimmon *	Cenizo	Mountain laurel	Pricklypear *
Javelinabush	Catclaw acacia +	Catclaw mimosa	Whitebrush	Sacahiste
Yucca *	Mexican buckeye	Fragrant mimosa	Little walnut	Wafer ash
Tasajillo	Wolfberry	Willow baccharis	Balsam gourd	Pricklyash +

Class I Perennial Forbs				
Winecup	Dayflower	Showy menodora	Texas nightshade	Spiderwort
Snakeherb -	Bloodberry	Prairie acacia	Heath aster	Nodviolet
Primroses	Gauras	Penstemons	Green lilly	Illinois bundleflower
Four-o'clocks	Texas milkweed			Rain lilly
Class II Perennial Forbs				
Engelmann Daisy	Knotweed leafflower	Bladderpod sida	Carlowrightia	Prairie clover
Bushsunflower	Milkwort	Snoutbean	Texas bindweed	Wild onion
Maxmillian sunflower-	Tall goldenrod	Ruellia	Chalkhill woollywhite	Neptunia
Velvet bundleflower	Ground cherry	Wood sorrell	Spiderling	Sensitivebriar
Passion flower	Angel trumpet	Low menodora	Sunflower goldeneye	Twinevine-
Hairy tubetongue	Sweet gaillardia	Rock daisy	Thyrallis	Skeletonplant
Milk pea	Scurf pea	Morning glory	Westen indigo	Dutchman's pipe
Gayfeather	Trailing ratany	Turk's cap	Prairie paintbrush	Larkspur
Class III Perennial Forbs				
Orange zexmenia	Dutchman's britches	Daleas	Verbenas	Field ragweed
Fleabane	Evolvulus	Mexican sagewort	Bladderpods	False ragweed
Tall bush clover	Noseburn -	Pennyroyal	Crow poison	Wild mercury
Lazy daisy	Spreading sida +	Perennial sparges	Greenthread	Copperleaf
Wild buckwheat	Indian mallow	Sticky seloa	Spiny happlopappus	Puccoon
Chicktheif mentzelia	Globemallow	Flame flower	Western ragweed+	Windflower
Rock lettuce	Whitwort	Bluets	Dwarf aster	Snapdragon vine
Class IV Perennial Forbs				
Mealycup sage	Dogweed	Milkweeds (most)	Silverleaf nightshade	Horsenettle
Queen's delight	Goldaster	Broom snakeweed+	Prairie coneflower	Curlycup gumweed
Ratear coldenia	Plains zinnia	Desert holly	Horehound	Frostweed
Threadleaf groundsel	Spikemoss	Twingleaf senna	Germander	Tetraclea
Tetranuris	Dogbane	Lindheimer senna	Buffalogourd	Frogfruit
Grassland croton	Leatherweed croton	Milkvines	Texas salvia	White snakeroot
False nightshade	Skullcap	Milfoil	Ferns	Rushpea

* These woody plants have seasonal high value in the production of acorns, fruits, beans or flowers eaten by deer

+ These plants are sometimes rated one class better than indicated

- These plants are sometimes rated one class lower than indicated

See the back side for an explanation of categories

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Preference Categories of Deer Food Plants

The checklist of plants on the reverse side contains the common woody plants and perennial forbs which deer use as food in the region. Deer also eat some grass but it usually makes up only 5 to 10% of the diet. When available, deer also eat annual forbs. Since annual forbs are short-lived and unreliable, they are not usually considered when evaluating the long-term stable deer food supply. Some of the more common annual forbs are listed at the bottom.

Woody plants (browse and mast) and perennial forbs are the mainstay of the deer diet in the region. These plants are placed into one of four categories or classes according to their relative preference by deer. The Class I plants are the most preferred and Class IV are the least preferred. By evaluating the plants which are present and their abundance, managers can gain an understanding of the quality of their habitat compared to its potential.

Class I plants are highly preferred and will usually be eaten in preference to other plants. These are the “prime rib” of deer food. In fact Class I plants are so preferred by deer (as well as goats and sheep) that they are usually absent or in very short supply in most pastures. They have been grazed out of most pastures and persist primarily in protected areas. These are the best deer food plants, but because they are rather uncommon, they do not contribute much to the deer diet.

Class II plants are desirable deer food plants, and might be compared to a pretty good chick-fried steak. These plants are generally palatable, productive and high in nutrition. They should be rather common on well-managed rangeland. If Class II plants are absent or very heavily used, it is an indication of too many deer, goats, sheep or exotics.

Class III plants are not highly preferred by deer. They can be compared to hamburger meat. Because these plants are common, they often make up the bulk of the deer diet. This is especially true when Class II plants are in short supply. These plants are generally lower in nutrition and palatability. If Class III plants are heavily used, it is a sign of overpopulation and nutritional stress.

Class IV plants are the least preferred food plants for deer and may be compared to a stale bologna sandwich. Deer will eat these plants, especially when better plants are not available. For example, if there is a browse line on live oak (Class III) making it unavailable, deer may consume large amounts of persimmon. Or, after deciduous shrubs have dropped their leaves, deer may eat large amounts of cedar if desirable forbs are not available.

There are exceptions to these generalizations. At certain times of the year such as early spring, even some Class IV plants are nutritious and readily eaten, but usually only for a short period. Also, if a pasture lacks Class I and Class II plants, then Class III plants become the most preferred by default. There are also some regional differences in preference.

The greater the diversity of plants, especially in Class I and Class II, the better the deer habitat will be. Rangeland dominated by few species, mostly in Class IV is generally considered poor habitat in need of improved management.

Cool Season Annual Forbs				
Wild vetch	Tallow weed	Annual primrose	Tansymustard	Draba
Nuttall peavine	Filaree	Bladderpod	Pellitory	Prairie bishop
Wild carrot	Indian blanket	Bluebonnet	Slender tetraeneuris	Bluecurls
Burclover	Huisachedaisy	Phlox	Coreopsis	Carolina geranium
Warm Season Annual Forbs				
Doveweed croton	Tumbleweed	Kochia	Pepperweed	Lambsquarter
Pigweed	Sow thistle	Texas thistle	Flax	Toadflax
Lazy daisy	Spurges/Euphorbia	Annual gaura	Tx star daisy	Nama
Annual broomweed	Prickly lettuce	Sunflower	Sleepydaisy	Cowpen daisy
Mare's tail	Giant ragweed	Common ragweed	Basketflower	Common mallow
Texas paintbrush	Scrambled eggs	Pokeberry	Venus lookingglass	