



United States Department of Agriculture

# CRP Practice CP12

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Indiana – March 2016 (ver. 1.3)

## Wildlife Food Plot Program Job Sheet

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this practice is to establish annual or perennial wildlife food plots that will enhance wildlife and wildlife habitat.



A food plot is an annual or perennial planting of grain, legumes, and forbs (wildflowers and some "weeds" such as foxtail, common ragweed and smartweeds). Deer, rabbit, quail, pheasant, turkey and a variety of other wildlife found on rural land can benefit from food plots.

A food plot offers wildlife a place to forage for food in late fall, winter and early spring after field crops are harvested. It is left standing over winter to encourage wildlife use. Where fall plowing buries the majority of crop residue, food plots are an excellent choice to encourage wildlife survival. When incorporated with Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices such as CP1 and CP2, it compliments the grass cover already present.

Food plots *alone* are not good habitat cover. Landowners should strive to provide permanent wildlife habitat for the target species. See the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Standard [Upland Wildlife Habitat Management \(645\)](#) for further guidance.

### WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Apply this practice on fields that meet eligibility requirements for the CRP as determined by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

### CRP POLICY

Wildlife Food Plot CP12 may only be used in conjunction with CP1, CP2, CP3, CP3A, CP4D, and CP25. Cost-share is not authorized for this practice.

Individual food plots will not:

- Exceed 10 percent of a field
- Exceed five (5) acres per field
- Exceed five (5) in size
- Be immediately adjacent to one another.

### PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider making food plots at least 50 feet wide, with a minimum size of one-fourth ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) acre. If it is expected that deer will be feeding heavily in the food plot, plant in squares and increase the size to two (2) – five (5) acres.
- It is recommended that food plots be planted on the contour.
- Consider leaving un-harvested grain strips along field edges, adjacent to other cover types.
- Locate food plots within one-fourth ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ) mile of quality winter cover such as woodland, shrub thickets, cattail marshes, and warm season grass fields.
- To minimize snow accumulation, food plots should be located on the south and east side of permanent winter cover.
- Where permanent cover is not available, consider including a snow-catch area in the plan design, especially in Northern Indiana. See [Examples of Annual Food Plot Designs](#) below.
- Consider requesting technical assistance from an NRCS, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologists.

## SPECIFICATIONS

Site-specific requirements will be listed on the attached specification sheet. Specifications are prepared in accordance with the FOTG Standard [Upland Wildlife Habitat Management \(645\)](#). Food plots must be separated by a sufficient distance to maximize wildlife benefits and access ability.

- Plantings will occur early enough to allow species maturity before frost.
- Except for locations where noxious, invasive, or unwanted vegetation may become an issue if left unplanted, rotate food plots every year. Plant only 1/3 of the food plot each year. Allow the natural succession of forbs to occur on the remaining 2/3 of the food plot.
- Food plots will be located on the least erosive areas of the field. Adequate vegetative cover must be developed and maintained to provide both wildlife and erosion control benefits.
- Annual food plots will be left standing throughout the winter and spring until replanted.
- Annual and Perennial food plot seeding mixtures will be chosen from the appropriate tables below.

### Annual Species

	Seed Rate (lbs./acre)		Seed Depth (in.)	Planting Dates
	Single Rate	Mix Rate <sup>1</sup>		
Buckwheat	20	8	1/2 - 1	June 15 - July 15
Corn	15	4	1 - 2	April 25 - June 1
Cowpeas	20	5	1/2 - 1	May 1 - July 1
German/Pearl Millet	8	2	1/2 - 1	May 1 - June 1
Grain Sorghum (Milo)	12	4	1/2 - 1	May 1 - July 15
Kale	4	3	1/4 - 1/2	Aug. 1 - Sept. 15
Oats	40	10	1/4 - 3/4	Mar. 1 - April 15
Partridge Pea	10	2	1/2-1 1/2	May 1 - June 1
Rape/Canola	4	3	1/4 - 1/2	Aug. 1 - Sept. 15
Soybeans	45	8	1/2-1 1/2	May 1 - July 1
Sunflowers	12	2	1/2-1 1/2	May 1 - July 1
Turnips	4	3	1/4 - 1/2	Aug. 1 - Sept. 15
Wheat	25	10	1/4 - 3/4	Sep. 15 - Oct. 30

<sup>1</sup>Total mix not to exceed 20 lbs./acre

## Seeding Dates

Species/Mix	IN Seeding Dates	Dormant Seeding Dates*
Cool Season Grasses/Forbs	3/1-5/15 8/1-9/15	12/1-3/1
Legumes	3/1-5/15 8/1-9/15	12/1-3/1
Warm Season Grasses/Forbs	4/1-6/15	12/1-3/1

\*Increase seeding rates by 25% if dormant seeding.

### Perennial Species

	Seed Rate <sup>2</sup> (lbs./ac.)	Seed Depth (inches)	Planting Dates
Alfalfa	6	1/4 - 1/2	Mar. 1 - May 1 or Aug. 1 - Sept. 1
Alsike Clover	2	1/4 - 1/2	Jan. 1 - May 1 or Aug. 1 - Sept. 1
Ladino Clover	1	1/4 - 1/2	Jan. 1 - May 1 or Aug. 1 - Sept. 1
Red Clover	5	1/4 - 1/2	Jan. 1 - May 1 or Aug. 1 - Sept. 1
Common, Kobe, or Marion Lespedeza <sup>1</sup>	5	1/4 - 1/2	Feb. 1 - May 1

<sup>1</sup> Annuals that will maintain themselves by re-seeding for several years. Best suited for sites south of I-70.

<sup>2</sup> When mixing more than one species, adjust the rates based on the percentage of each species needed in the planting. For example, a 50/50 Ladino Clover/Alfalfa mix would result in 1/2 lb. of Ladino Clover and 3 lbs. of Alfalfa.

### Example food plot sizes

Acres	Length	Width	Ft. <sup>2</sup>
1/4	363	30	10,890
1/2	363	60	21,780
1	545	80	43,560
3	1,307	100	130,680
5	1,089	200	217,800

## RECOMMENDED SUITABILITY

### Annual Food Plots

- Primarily target upland game birds and deer.
- Mainly function to establish safe winter foraging areas that restrict unnecessary movement and to provide a dependable winter food source to carry game through the winter.

### Perennial Food Plots

- Primarily target deer, quail, turkey, pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, rabbits, and songbirds.
- Mainly function to provide open space and foraging areas.

## FERTILIZER AND LIME CONSIDERATIONS

### Annual Food Plots

- Lime and fertilizer should be based on a current soil test (less than four years old). In areas with existing vegetation that shows signs of nutrient deficiencies, or if the soil test shows phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) are in the low to very low range, apply enough fertilizer (organic or inorganic) to raise N, P and K to a level needed for a 1 ton/ac yield goal. Do not apply any nitrogen (N) for warm season grasses. Use Purdue University recommendations from the Crop Fertilizer Recommendation Calculator <http://www.agry.purdue.edu/mmp/webcalc/fertRec.asp>, or the Indiana NRCS Seeding Tool – Indiana Fertilizer Calculator.
- If the pH is 6.0 or less, apply enough lime per acre to bring pH to meet the tolerance range of the planned plant species. Soil amendments will be incorporated during seedbed preparation, or applied before planting if a no-till drill is used. Apply lime according to [Tri-State Fertilizer Recommendations - PU AY-9-32](#), or the Indiana NRCS Seeding Tool – Indiana Fertilizer Calculator.

### Perennial Food Plots

- To determine the need for liming materials, a soil test from the current planting year or during the previous two years is recommended for perennial food plots. The recommended rate per acre of liming materials, as recommended in the soil test for the crop seeded, will be used.
- Under normal circumstances, the recommended perennial species do not need to be fertilized.
- Before seeding, inoculate the legume seed with the appropriate inoculant for the species. Pre-inoculated seed may be used, but will be re-inoculated if used beyond dates specified on the inoculant tag.



## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

1. General weed control is not required as the presence of some forbs (such as foxtail and smartweeds) actually benefit wildlife by providing higher protein and greater number of seeds than domestic grains.
2. Protect the acres from unplanned haying and grazing. Fences may need to be constructed and maintained to exclude livestock.
3. Measures will be taken to control outbreaks of noxious plants, such as Johnsongrass, Canada Thistle and other invasive species in order to comply with state and local noxious weed laws.
4. All herbicide label requirements and applicable state and federal regulations will be followed.
5. Spraying or other control of invasive species and noxious plants will be done on a “spot” basis to protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.
6. On perennial food plots, management practices and activities will not disturb cover during the primary nesting period for grassland bird species of **April 1 through August 1**. Mowing, however, may be needed during the plant establishment period to control weeds.
7. Perennial food plots generally will not persist beyond 5-6 years. Manage perennial vegetation every 3-5 years after adequate vegetative establishment. Management may include one or more of the following options: (1) mowing with residue removed or spread evenly across the field, (2) light disking, (3) top dressing with fertilizer (P at 40 lbs/ac and K at 60 lbs/ac), or (4) re-establishment. Management activities, which substantially disturb the vegetative cover, should take place prior to April 1, or between August 1 and August 15.

## MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Mid-Contract Management (MCM) is required on this practice. If the CRP acres are less than 5 acres, the entire acreage can be managed in a single year; otherwise, the maximum amount that can be disturbed during any one year is ½ of the contract acreage. For maximum habitat value, disturb no more than 1/3 of the contract acreage in any given year.

Areas devoted to grass have the following options:

- Prescribed Burning
- Strip Disking
- Strip Spraying
- Inter-seeding forbs/legumes/pollinator habitat

MCM activities will be avoided on environmentally sensitive areas including:

- a) Concentrated flow areas,
- b) Critical areas,
- c) Within the first 20 feet of a practice that borders a water resource to avoid water quality resource concerns, and

- d) Other areas where gully erosion is likely.

Environmentally sensitive areas will be marked on the plan map to ensure Mid-Contract Management activities are avoided on these areas.

Grassland areas must be established for a minimum of three (3) years before initiating MCM activities.

MCM activities operations will not be performed from April 1 through August 1 to protect the primary nesting period for grassland bird species. It is also recommended, but is not required, to delay MCM activities until after August 15 to reduce the chance of harming fledgling birds and other young wildlife.

MCM activities operations will be performed along field contours, or across the slope, when practical.

Strips will parallel brushy or woody escape cover when feasible

# WILDLIFE FOOD PLOT (CP12) SPECIFICATIONS SHEET

<b>Landowner:</b>			<b>County:</b>	
<b>Farm:</b>	<b>Tract:</b>	<b>Field(s):</b>	<b>Acres:</b> See below	<b>Date:</b>

<b>Recommended Species and Seeding Rate</b>				
<small>All rates are in Pure Live Seed (PLS)</small>				
<b>Species</b>		<b>Seeding Rate (lbs./acre)</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Total = (Rate X Acres)</b>
<b>Annual</b>	<b>Perennial</b>			
				0.0
				0.0
				0.0
				0.0

<b>Site Preparation - BEFORE Planting Year:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prior Year Herbicide (per label)<sup>1</sup>:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prior Year Herbicide (per label)<sup>1</sup>:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Herbicide (per label):</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Herbicide (per label):</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Tillage:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fertilizer (per soil test):</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b>	
<sup>1</sup> Note: Planting corn or sorghum on fields where Atrazine carryover is present may be a problem.	
<b>NOTES:</b>	

<b>Planting Year:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Planting Method:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
If unforeseen circumstances prohibit planting by this date, please contact the local NRCS office as soon as possible.	

<b>Additional Information</b>

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