



United States Department of Agriculture

CRP Practice CP12

Wildlife Food Plots

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Indiana – July 2020 (ver. 1.0)

Wildlife Food Plot Program Specification 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 (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 (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.
- Consider requesting technical assistance from an NRCS, Farm Bill, 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 $\frac{1}{3}$ of the food plot each year. Allow the natural succession of forbs to occur on the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ 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. **SITE**

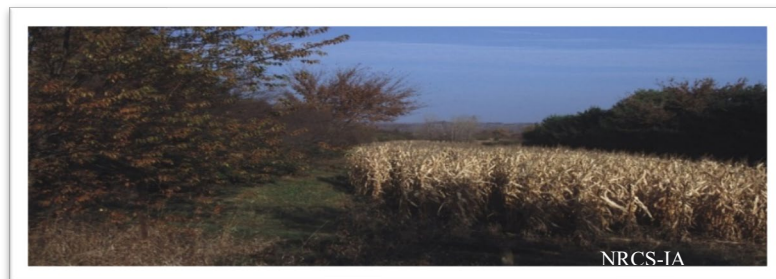
PREPARATION

Site preparation can use a combination of methods, include herbicide treatment, prescribed burning, mowing, and tillage. Each of these methods must be used with the appropriate timing and combination to maximize effectiveness. Disking should be used with caution, as soil disturbance can release additional weed seeds, creating a larger problem. Mowing alone is not likely to be sufficient and should be combined with chemical, prescribed fire or additional mechanical treatments. Non-chemical methods and organic methods are possible but are labor intensive and will likely take longer. These methods are most suited for smaller sites. See Indiana Job Sheet 315 Herbaceous Weed Control- Site Preparation, for more information.

FERTILIZER AND LIME CONSIDERATIONS

Annual Food Plots

- Adequate nutrient and pH conditions will assure good seed head and stalk development.
- Perform a soil test from the current planting year or during the previous two years to determine the need for commercial fertilizer and liming materials.
- Determine the rate of commercial fertilizer from 75-100% of Purdue University's recommended rate per acre of each nutrient for the species being established **for the lowest yield goal**. See Extension Bulletin E-2567, Rep. August 1996, *Tri-State Fertilizer Recommendation*.



Perennial Food Plots

- To determine the need for liming materials, use a soil test from the current planting year or during the previous two years for perennial food plots. Use the recommended rate per acre of liming materials, as recommended in the soil test for the crop seeded.
- Under normal circumstances, do not fertilize the perennial species.
- 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.

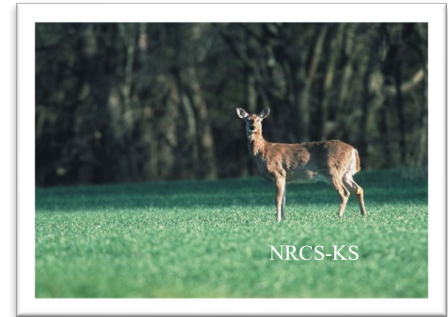


Table 1

Annual Species	Seed Rate (lbs./acre)		Seed Depth (in.)	Planting Dates
	Single Rate	Mix Rate ¹		
Buckwheat	20	8	½ - 1	June 15 - July 15
Corn	15	4	1 - 2	April 25 - June 1
Cowpeas	20	5	½ - 1	May 1 - July 1
German/Pearl Millet	8	2	½ - 1	May 1 - June 1
Grain Sorghum (Milo)	12	4	½ - 1	May 1 - July 15
Kale	4	3	¼ - ½	Aug. 1 - Sept. 15
Oats	40	10	¼ - ¾	Mar. 1 - April 15
Partridge Pea	10	2	½-1½	May 1 - June 1
Rape/Canola	4	3	¼ - ½	Aug. 1 - Sept. 15
Soybeans	45	8	½-1½	May 1 - July 1
Sunflowers	12	2	½-1½	May 1 - July 1
Turnips	4	3	¼ - ½	Aug. 1 - Sept. 15
Wheat	25	10	¼ - ¾	Sep. 15 - Oct. 30

¹Total mix not to exceed 20 lbs./acre

Article 15 Indiana Seed Law regulations and labeling requirements.

Note: All food plot seed must meet IC 15-15-1

Table 2

Perennial Species	Seed Rate ² (lbs./ac.)	Seed Depth (inches)	Planting Dates
Alfalfa	6	¼ - ½	Mar. 1 - May 1 or Aug. 1 - Sept. 1
Alsike Clover	2	¼ - ½	Jan. 1 - May 1 or Aug. 1 - Sept. 1
Ladino Clover	1	¼ - ½	Jan. 1 - May 1 or Aug. 1 - Sept. 1
Common, Kobe, or Marion Lespedeza ¹	5	¼ - ½	Feb. 1 - May 1

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

² 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 ½ lb. of Ladino Clover and 3 lbs. of Alfalfa.

PLANTING METHODS

No matter which planting method is selected, it is important that the seeding equipment is properly calibrated to deliver the correct amount of seed to the proper depth. Properly calibrate your broadcast seeder based on your seed mix. Purdue University Extension has resources on how to calibrate different types of seeders.

Broadcast Seeding: Seed may be broadcast if completed in a uniform manner. The seed bed should be prepared enough to allow good seed to soil contact. When frost-seeding, the freeze-thaw conditions of the soil will work the seed into the ground, preventing the need for additional culti-packing. In growing season months, the seedbed will be culti-packed before broadcasting if Tillage was included as part of the site preparation. The entire site will be culti-packed after seeding to ensure good seed-to-soil contact. Wind speed should be 15 miles per hour or less when broadcasting.

No-Till seeding: Use a no-till drill with seven (7) inch or less row spacing. Ensure the drill is designed to handle the type of seed being planted (especially important for native grasses). Planting too deep will result in poor establishment. Soils that are too wet or too dry can also cause improper seed placement.

Conventional Seeding: Prepare a fine firm seedbed to a depth of three (3) to four (4) inches. Be sure to firm the bed prior to seeding or the risk of planting the seed too deep increases. Soils that are too wet or too dry can also cause improper seed placement.

HAYING AND GRAZING

Exclude all acres from haying and grazing year-round. Managed haying or grazing are not authorized on CP12 acres.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

1. General weed control is not required as the presence of some forbs (such as foxtail, smartweeds and ragweed) benefit wildlife by providing higher protein and greater number of seeds than domestic grains.
2. Take measures to control severe outbreaks of noxious plants, such as Johnsongrass, Canada Thistle and other invasive species in order to comply with state and local noxious weed laws.
3. Perform spraying or other control of invasive species and noxious plants on a “spot” basis to protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.
4. Follow all herbicide label requirements and applicable state and federal regulations.
5. Protect the acres from unplanned haying and grazing.
6. On perennial food plots, management practices and activities will not disturb cover during the primary nesting period for grassland 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 Activities may include one or more of the following options:
 - a) Mowing with residue removed or spread evenly across the field
 - b) Light disking
 - c) Top dressing with fertilizer, if needed, according to a soil test
 - d) Re-establishment

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Management Activities are required on this practice.

Areas devoted to food plots have the following options:

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



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Site Information				
Landowner(S)	County	Program/Contract	Planting Year	Type of Food Plot
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Farm/Tract	Field(s)	Acres	Target Wildlife	
_____	_____	_____	_____	

See attached Plan Map for locations.

Plot number(s): _____

Species Planted	Seeding Rate Per Acre (Lbs)	Acres to be Seeded	Total Seed Needed (LBS)

Plot number(s): _____

Species Planted	Seeding Rate Per Acre (Lbs)	Acres to be Seeded	Total Seed Needed (LBS)

Other information: