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Food Plot Planning

by Chris Larsen

As I look out my window today, the number "5" stares back from the thermometer.  It is cold.  Punxsutawney Phil says we'll be in the grips of winter for at least another month.  I'll be out shed hunting but it's too cold to do much of anything else outside.  The good news is I'm a planner.  When I'm not hunting, I'm thinking about hunting.  What tree I'll sit in, what I'll be wearing, and what day I'll be there fill up my mind, even in February.

It's cold right now but daylight hours are getting longer and it won't be long before the first food plot seeds touch the earth.  A great way to beat cabin fever is planning your food plots.  There is more to it than just going out and spreading seed.  There are a few steps to take now that will make your food plots more successful in the fall.

**Set Goals**

What is the purpose of your food plot plan?  Do you simply want to provide more forage for deer in the area?  If you hunt in an area with a lot of corn, putting in a 10 acre, square shaped plot of corn probably isn't going to do anything for you.  That same plot would be incredible in a densely forested area.  If you're going to hunt over the plot, pinch points and funnels should be part of the plan.  Setting goals and putting together a comprehensive plan should be done before seeds are ordered or soil tests are conducted.

**Assess The Area**

There are thousands of acres of corn surrounding the woods I hunt.  A small plot of corn probably isn't going to be effective for me.  But if my plan includes a late season hunt in January, having some standing corn where most of the corn crop tends to be harvested by November can be very valuable.  My friend has already talked to the farmer he leases from.  The farmer is planning to put in a lot of soybeans this year.  Soybeans probably aren't going to be the ticket for him.  When planning your food plots, take a look at what deer already have and try to provide them with something they can't get anywhere else.  If you're hunting the only winter wheat field for miles there is a good chance you'll have plenty of deer to hunt.

**Think About The Wind**

Most food plot enthusiasts put seeds in the ground with the intent of hunting over it at some point during the season.  Thinking about how and where you will hunt the plot will have a big effect on your success.  First of all, you should be able to access the plot and stand without bumping deer.  Then determine if your scent will spook deer.  I try to set stands for two different wind directions on each plot.  For example, one plot may have stands set for a north or a west wind while another plot is set up for an east or south wind.  Most hunters know they don't want their scent blowing onto the food plot.  But many fail to recognize when their scent is falling into deer travel routes or even bedding areas.  Knowing how deer access the food plot and where they are bedding during the day is also a big factor in stand locations.

It's a long way to opening day but it's never too early to start putting together your hunting and food plot strategy.

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