Food Plot Timing

Food Plot Timing - Timing your food plot so it is not coming up when there is nothing else to eat in the woods will attract deer to your food plot when it is not ready to be browsed by deer. When this happens the young seedlings can be pulled up and eaten roots and all. This is especially true with what we call sugar treats such as iron clay cowpeas, Austrian winter peas, or Buckwheat which the entire plant is edible when it emerges. You should plan all traditional food plots (cultivated plots) to be germinating in early spring when all the native plants are budding out new tender growth. During this three to four week period there is so much tender and nutritious vegetation available to the deer they won’t bother your young food plot too much. By the time the native vegetation starts getting tough and less desirable your food plot plants have enough size they can tolerate browsing by deer.

The next time this takes place is when mast is falling from trees (acorns) a favorite of deer. When acorns are abundant you can plant a fall food plot and your deer will not bother it much until the acorns become scarce. Hopefully, by then your fall plant species will have enough size that deer can begin browsing without harming the plants.

There are insects and diseases that can attack a food plot, but this is rarely fatal to a food plot. Even if worms and grasshoppers become abundant, they are not going to completely destroy your plot but you may find turkeys spending a lot of time in your plots debugging your plants for you. When you plant mixtures you have less of a problem with insects and diseases because insects and especially diseases are plant specific. Many legumes are too “hot” for insects as the protein content is more than the insect can tolerate. So, don’t worry much about insects and you really won’t have much disease if you plant a mixture of plants.

There can be a crop failure from drought or flood and there is not much you can do about these “mother nature” calamities. Deer are often the result of crop failure and using a food plot excluder can determine if this is the case. Usually if a food plot fails from too much deer pressure it is usually one of two things. You don’t have enough food plot area for the size of deer herd or the plots are just too small for the area you are trying to serve. You will need to increase the size of the food plot or increase the number of food plots or both.

Food plot excluders are a small area of your food plot fenced off so the deer cannot browse the plants within the excluder. This will prove to you how much the deer are eating in your food plot and if deer pressure is why you don’t have lush thriving food plot. We have had food plot plants grow out the top of our excluder and hardly any growth at all on the rest of the food plot plant. This proved that there were too many deer feeding on the food plot for the plot to flourish.

An easy way to build an inexpensive food plot excluder is with a twelve foot piece of four foot tall chicken wire found at any farm and ranch supply. Take this wire and four fence post to your food plot the same day you are planting. After planting your food plot set the four fence post in the ground three feet apart in a square arrangement. Staple the chicken wire around the post from the outside. Set this up out in the middle of your food plot. You will be amazed at how much the deer are browsing your food plot after a few weeks. When you see how much the plants have grown in your excluder you can visualize just how much forage you have provided your deer outside the excluder.

No-till plots aren’t usually over browsed by deer as much as plowed and cultivated plots. This is usually because the food plot's species roots are inter laced with the existing plants you no-tilled into. Even if the deer eat off the tops the main stem and roots are still intact and will recover and continue to grow. It is still a good idea to build an excluder in your no-till plot just to see how much your deer are using your food plot.