



Brassicas and Cereals

Summer & fall planted food plots for whitetail

FIRST AND FOREMOST

First, real-quick... get a soil test. It lets you know what amendments are necessary to ensure that nutrients needed for growth and production are both present and available to your growing plants. Generally, the primary recommended soil amendments include adding specific levels of lime (to increase soil pH), nitrogen (N), phosphorus and potassium (K). Step 2 – eliminate weedy competition. Step 3 – properly prepare the seed bed. You should be planting into a smooth, firm and weed free seed bed.

BRASSICA

Brassicas aka “leafy-greens” include rape, kale, turnips and radishes. They are a cool-season forage planted in the late summer or fall (also spring-planted in the north) that mature quickly (~45 days) and provide forage in the leaves and bulbs (many species). After the first frost or two, relative sugar content in the leaves increases and it becomes especially attractive to deer. Deer will dig at bulbs later in the season.

Some claim brassicas are the best deer forage available while others report marginal (if any) use. This could be due to deer density, but some suggest that deer need to “discover” brassicas and use will increase over time.

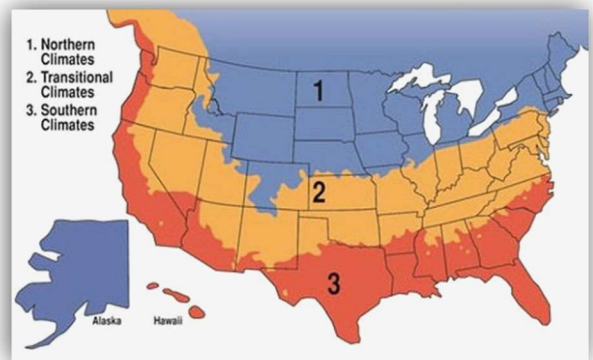
Nutrition – brassicas (depending on species) are very productive (2-4 tons of forage/ac) with its highly-digestible forage (only 15% ADF) containing 25-35% protein.

Planting – brassicas tolerate heavy grazing and are somewhat tolerant to dry conditions, but perform best on loamy, well-drained soils with a neutral pH of 6.0-6.5. Seed bed should be weed free, smooth and firm. Be sure to cultipack prior to seeding to prevent burying seed too deep (1/4-1/2”). Broadcast seed on soil then cultipack for seed contact. Ideally seed the brassicas just prior to a gentle rain in July (North), August (Transition) or September (South).

Fertilization – in addition to following soil test amendment recommendations, production will increase when adding 50#s of nitrogen 6-8 weeks after planting.

IMPORTANT – To avoid disease and harmful insects, do not plant brassicas in the same food plot for more than 2 consecutive years alternating with three years of another forage (small grains, clovers).

Map showing planting date zones for brassica and small grains.



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or call – 866-914-7373

SMALL GRAINS (OATS, WHEAT, TRITICALE, RYE)

Small grains (aka cereal grains) are a great choice for deer food plots. They are inexpensive, easy to grow, highly digestible, full of protein, packed with carbohydrates for energy and can withstand heavy browsing pressure. They can be either drilled or broadcast and, when late summer / early fall planted, they produce lush, growing vegetation when much of the surrounding vegetation is going dormant.

Species Selection - Determining which small grain to use in your food plot should be based on site conditions, neighboring available food sources, and general preferences. Each species has qualities which may help it perform better on a given site.

Seeding – after amending your soil per your soil test recommendations and eliminating weedy competition, prepare a smooth, firm and even seed bed using drags, rakes or cultipackers. Watch the weather during your planting date window and plant seed just prior to a gentle soaking rain. Once seeded, incorporate the seed into the soil with a cultipacker or light drag.

Fertilizer – small grains will benefit from adding 50# of Nitrogen 3-6 weeks after planting or if leaves look pale and yellowish instead of green.

Mowing – mow if your grains exceed 6-8” as deer prefer tender young shoots. Depending on project size and deer use, this may not be necessary.

Nurse Crops – oats and wheat are excellent nurse crops for alfalfa, clovers and brassicas. Do not use rye or triticale with these species as both have allelopathic characteristics which can inhibit small seed germination. Blend 50# per acre of oats or wheat with 2.5# of annual clovers or brassicas. Deer will feed on the quick growing shoots of the small grain while your alfalfa, clovers or brassicas establish.

	Oats	Wheat	Triticale	Rye
NUTRITIONAL VALUE				
Taste preference	#1	#2	#3	#4
Height (inches)	24-30	30-42	48-60	48-60
Protein Content (%)	25+	15-23	20	9-15
Forage Production	Good	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Palatability	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good
Acid Detergent Fiber (%)	< 20	20-23		
PLANTING INFORMATION				
pH	6.0-6.5	6.0-7.0	5.5-7.0	5.0-7.0
Seeding rate drilled (#/ac)	80	90	90	90
Seeding rate broadcast (#/ac)	100	120	120	120
Seeding depth (inches)	0.5-1.5	0.25-1.0	0.5-1.0	0.25-1.0
Seeding Date North	Aug	Aug	Late Aug - mid Sep	mid Aug - early Sep
Seeding Date Transition	Sep	Sep	Early Sep	Late Sep
Seeding Date South	Sep-Oct	Oct	Sep	Oct
RELATIVE TOLERANCES				
Wet soils	Fair	Very Good	Good	Good
Drought	Far	Good	Very Good	Very Good
Poor soils	Fair	Fair	Good	Excellent
Salinity	Fair	Fair	Good	Very Good
Cold / Winter	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Shade	Fair	Good	Good	Very Good
USE IN MIXES				
Use as a nurse crop	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Poor
Allelopathic			Some	Yes

BUYING SEED – www.PFHabitatStore.com – 866-914-7373

Small grains (oats, wheat, rye, triticale) can be very inexpensive when purchased locally although availability of preferred varieties can vary. For those wanting seed delivered to their door, shipping costs can equal or exceed the seed cost.

Pheasants Forever can ship small grains, brassicas, clovers, food plot blends and conservation mixes directly to you (shipping included in our pricing).

Be sure to check out “Big Buck Brassica” on our food plot page. BBB is a proprietary blend of brassicas (forage turnip, forage radish, purple top turnip, hybrid forage brassica, rapeseed and kale) designed to attract deer to your project and keep them there all fall and winter.

