



Pheasants Forever / Quail Forever
Habitat Information Sheet #14

Sunflowers

Signature Series Food Plot



General Description

Sunflowers rank first among the favorite foods of wildlife. Dove Kandy Sunflowers will drive your doves, gamebirds and songbirds wild! This blend of small, black-seeded, high oil varieties are chock-full of energy – just the ticket to draw doves into early fall shooting fields.

Target Species / Wildlife Value

No doubt sunflowers are a favorite of doves, but pheasants also love to dine on the seeds in the fall.

Site Selection

For attracting doves, fields should be 2-10 acres in size and located in an open area, ideally near a pond with bare shoreline. A few standing dead trees in the area can provide loafing areas, but sunflowers require full sun and should not be located in small fields near woody edges. Further, sunflowers do not like their feet wet so establish in a well-drained field. Consider rotating sunflowers with other food plot varieties every second or third year to reduce weed pressure and disease in the soil.

Timeline

Sunflowers are a “full season crop” throughout the Midwest and Great Plains. Plant as early as possible to better ensure they mature and dry down (and if your state allows, mowed) before September 1. **IMPORTANT:** but be sure planting is after the last frost emerging sunflowers are highly susceptible. Generally, conduct site prep in April with typical planting in early May.

Planting Rates and Spacing

A 25 lb bag plants 4-5 acres (best if drilled or planted in rows, but may also be broadcast).

Contains

A diverse sunflower mixture with multiple maturity ranges and heights.

Weed Management Options

Pre-plant / Pre-emergent: s-metolachlor (Dual II Magnum) or sulfentrazone (Spartan). Post-emergent: clethodim (Select, Arrow) or sethoxydim (Poast). Always follow label instructions.

Similar PFQF Signature Series Blends

Rooster Booster and Western Food and Cover also contain sunflowers, but also include other species.

Dove Kandy Signature Series Food Plot

General Planting Instructions

Site Preparation (generally April to early-May)

Poor site preparation is the number one reason for project failures. Mow (or burn) your food plot 3 to 5 weeks before planting to remove residual plant material from previous year. Alternately, mow (or disk) the previous fall, followed by spring disking and/or a burn-down herbicide application when new weedy growth is visible.

Spray with a contact herbicide (glyphosate / RoundUp) ahead of planting once weeds green up, following label instructions. If field has little history of broadleaf or grass competition, a contact herbicide may not be needed. Heavily disk the field 10 days after spraying, and prior to planting (unless you plan to no-till).

Weed Management (generally early May)

Some weeds in a wildlife food plot can provide additional cover and food, but too many weeds will compete with your food plot reducing or even eliminating yields. Your site should be weed free at the time of planting (see site prep).

- DO NOT SPRAY WITH CONTACT HERBICIDE (glyphosate / Roundup) ONCE ESTABLISHED. If sprayed, it will die.
- DO NOT SPRAY WITH BEYOND HERBICIDE. This mix does not include Clearfield variety sunflowers.
- General herbicide recommendations (ALWAYS FOLLOW LABEL):
 - Pre-Plant:
 - Dual Magnum (s-metolachlor) 1.3 pt/ac – to control annual grasses, nutsedge and small-seeded broadleaf weeds (pigweed / waterhemp). Incorporate into top 2 inches of soil within 2 weeks of planting.
 - Prowl 3.3 EC or Pendimax 3.3 EC – 1.2 to 3.6 pt/ac – annual grass control and small-seeded broadleaf. Incorporate within 7 days of planting.
 - Pre-Emergent
 - Dual Magnum (s-metolachlor) 1.33 pt / ac – apply immediately after planting for annual grasses and small seeded broadleaves (pigweed / waterhemp). Do NOT apply post. Avoid high rates.
 - Prowl or Pendimax 3.3 – 1.2 to 3.6 pt/ac – immediately after planting for annual grasses and small seeded broadleaf weeds. Must receive activating rainfall within 7 days. Do not apply post.
 - Spartan (Sulfentrazone) apply up to 3 days after planting for control of pigweeds, kochia, Russian thistle and certain other broadleaf weeds. Do NOT use post. Requires rainfall for activation. Tank mixtures of Prowl or Dual with Spartan have performed well in trials.
- Post-Emergent
 - Select, Arrow, Volunteer or Poast products can be used post-emergent to control annual and perennial grasses. Apply when grasses are growing actively but before they reach size limits listed on the label.

Planting (generally early May for Sept 1 dove field target, but may be seeded into early July)

Disk field before planting (unless no-tilling), incorporating fertilizer and nutrients (lime, etc.) per soil test results, or fertilize at planting. If not testing soil, 200 pounds of 12-12-12 per acre. Soil temperature at planting should be 50 degrees or warmer. Soils should be well drained (not wet). Plant within 24 hours of fertilizing. Do NOT overplant!

- For no-till or conventional row planters or grain drills, plant with 24-36" spacings and 12-16" in-row spacing. Seed at 1 to 1.5 inch depth. Recommended seeding rates should be about 5-6 pounds per acre (4-5 acres per bag) or 18,000 – 30,000 seeds.
- If broadcasting, recommended seeding rates for sunflower is 8-10 pounds per acre (2-3 acres per bag). Broadcast then incorporate into soil by dragging, cultipacking or lightly disking. Rolling seed bed after planting will increase germination.

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