



Wildlife Annual Food Plot Fact Sheet

Applicable to conservation practice Upland Wildlife Habitat Management - 645

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - North Dakota

May 2003



What is an annual food plot: An annual food plot is a planting of small grain or row crops for wildlife on rural land.

How does an annual food plot help wildlife: An annual food plot can enhance wildlife survival and improve the wildlife habitat complex by providing readily available food. Food plots are especially important on land planned to provide a winter or early spring food source. In many areas with good quality winter habitat, the food source is unavailable or too far away. Food plots may reduce the impacts of weather and predators when placed in proximity to winter protection. Food plots can also provide good nutrition for females preparing for offspring.

Planning Considerations:

- The recommended food plot size is 1/2 - 5 acres. One pheasant needs approximately 1 bushel of corn for a 5-month period, while one deer needs approximately 8 bushels. Design the food plot size according to estimated population of wintering wildlife.
- Consider multiple food plots where adequate winter cover exists.
- Food will be located adjacent to or within one-quarter mile of winter cover. Plots should be located on the leeward side of protected areas. If not located on the leeward side of protected areas, snow drifting into food plots can be lessened by establishing snow traps.
- No-till planting is recommended to minimize erosion.
- Planting of the plot should be early enough in the year to ensure maturity of food plants.
- Adequately prepare the seedbed to ensure food plant establishment.
- Food plots will be undisturbed until seedbed preparation the following spring, except for cultivating or spraying to control weeds.
- Avoid planting in a location that will increase wildlife activity near major highways.
- Following are suggested annual crop species seeding rates and dates. Corn or sunflower usually provides a food source above the snow.

All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis.

<u>CROP</u>	<u>RATE</u>	<u>DATE*</u>
Corn	18,000 -20,000 plants/acre	May 20
Sunflower (oil type)	18,000 -20,000 plants/acre row crop 4-6 lbs./acre solid-seeded	June 5
Millet (Proso)	30 pounds/acre	June 25
Sorghum (Grain)	30 lbs./acre solid-seeded	May 25
Barley	90 lbs./acre	May 31
Buckwheat	60 lbs./acre	May 20
Flax	40 lbs./acre	June 10
Oats	80 lbs./acre	May 31
Rye	90 lbs./acre	Sept. 30
Wheat	90 lbs./acre	May 31
Sudangrass	20 lbs./acre solid-seeded	May 20
Lentil	55 lbs./acre	May 20
Winter Peas	180 lbs./acre	May 20

*Planting dates will vary by geographic location, the crop variety, and weather conditions. Above dates are recommended last planting dates. Species need to be planted according to soil capabilities and limitations. Mixing of compatible crops is optional, such as corn and sunflowers provided chemical use is not a concern.

If pesticides are used, read and follow the pesticide label for application rates, authorized use information and Federal, State, or local restrictions.

During heavy snow periods placement of stacks or loosely baled small grains adjacent to winter cover may need to be considered. However, this type of feeding further concentrates animals and may lead to increased predation and disease transmission.

Other Planning Considerations Unique to Your Situation:

- _____
- _____
- _____

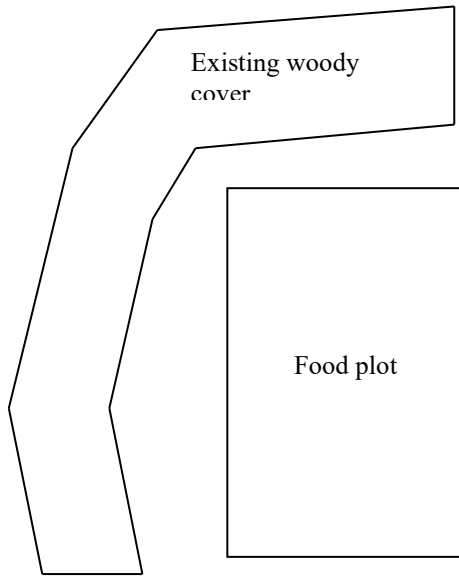
To apply this practice the following requirements must be met:

- Food will be located adjacent to or within one-quarter mile of winter cover and will be located on the leeward side of protected areas.
- Planting of the plot will be early enough in the year to ensure maturity of food plants.
- Adequately prepare seedbed to ensure food plant establishment.
- Food plots will be undisturbed until seedbed preparation the following spring, except for cultivating or spraying to control weeds.

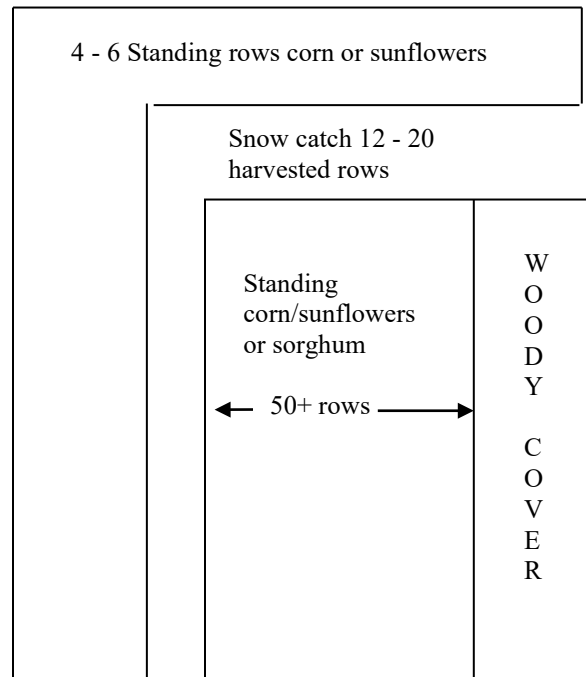
Maintaining the Food Plot

- Control all noxious weeds as identified by State and local laws.
- Protect areas from grazing.
- Control wind and water erosion.
- Determine wildlife use annually. If all food in the plot is used, consider increasing the size the following year. If less than 40 - 50 percent of the food is used, consider leaving the food plot for another year.

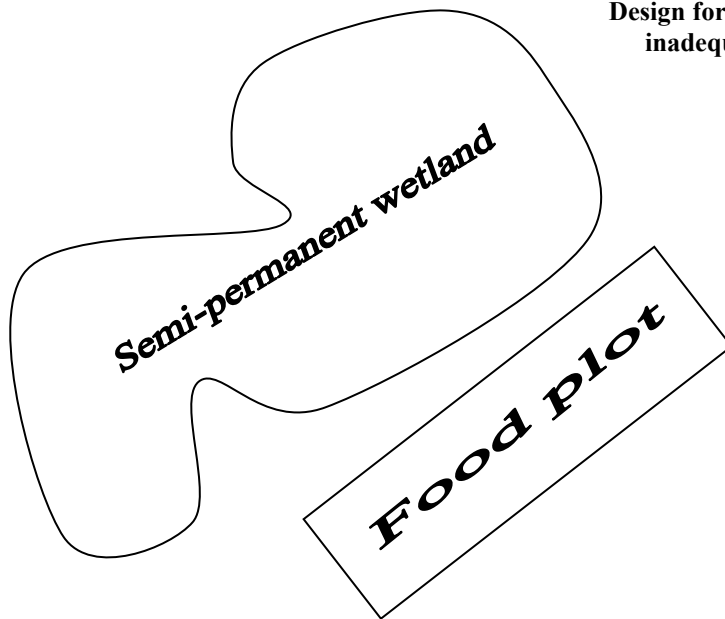
EXAMPLES OF ANNUAL FOOD PLOT DESIGN



Design where adequate existing snow trap is available.



Design for food plot and to help protect inadequate existing winter cover.



Design where winter cover is provided by semi-permanent wetland.

Where to get help: Contact your local NRCS office for site specific planning to install this practice.

NOTES: _____

