



NWTF Michigan Conservation Seed Program

Food Plot Tips

Successfully establishing an agricultural seed food plot is not as simple as dragging the ground and scattering seed. You must think, act, and react like a farmer. If you are not equipped to properly plant a plot, consider working in partnership with a local farmer and having him plant it for you.

- Select the site – The selected site should be large enough to get full sun and not be overly shaded by surrounding trees. But for turkeys it is best if it is near winter roost sites or trees suitable for roosting, like large old pines. It is ideal if the trees are on the north side of the food plot, blocking prevailing winds and allowing southern exposure. The plot also must be big enough to provide food for the entire winter, while also feeding deer, bear, and raccoons. Ideally this is 5-10 acres.
- Preparing the soil – If it is a first-time food plot you will need to remove all stumps and rocks, and then plow the soil well, followed by dragging to level it out. Then you should take soil samples to your local farmer coop or farm service agency to test the pH and nutrient contents. These will have to be adjusted to suit the crop you intend to grow by adding lime and fertilizer accordingly.
- Select your seed – To be best for turkeys, select crops that will stick above the snow, like corn, sorghum, or sunflowers. Make sure your seed will mature in your expected growing season! Many times folks will sell you seed varieties that are suited for southern farms with longer growing seasons and it will not mature in northern locations. Check the bag for that info and online or at feed stores for local conditions.
- Planting the seed – Some seed is suited to hand seeding and dragging, but most of them do much better when they are drilled in with a grain drill to the proper depth and at the proper seeding rate. This information is readily available online or at feed supply stores.
- Controlling weeds – While weedy plots are ok from a wildlife standpoint, the idea is to have a crop that develops good grain for food. Too much weed growth competes with the crop for nutrients and sunlight, inhibiting seed growth. Many of our seeds are “Roundup-Ready”, meaning you can spray the field with Roundup after there is a first flush of growth to kill the weeds, but it won’t harm the crop.
- Weather – Like all farmers, pray for the right amount of rain, at the right time.