

# Texas Parks Department Explains Benefits Of Food Plots

**By: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department**

Food plots may increase the value of hunting leases, make deer more visible for viewing opportunities, and improve the diet quality of deer.

However, planting food plots is not a replacement for poor habitat management.

Maintaining deer densities within the carrying capacity of the habitat, sound livestock grazing management, and maintaining quality habitat should be the first

priorities of any management program.

Food plots should not be considered a substitute for good management.

They should be considered "supplements" to the native habitat, not as a "cure-all" for low quality or poorly managed habitats.

Landowners will need to decide what, when and where to plant depending on each individual situation.

Perennials do not require planting every year, but they pro-

duce less forage than annuals.

All food plots should be fenced from livestock and warm-season annual food plots should be protected from deer until they are established.

To improve diet quality, a ranch should have one cool-season and one warm-season food plot per square mile.

Plot size will depend on animal density and property size.

The size and number of plots that can be established may be limited by lack of farmable soils.

Rectangular-shaped plots are preferred to long, narrow plots.

Food plots are the most productive if all woody plants inside the plots are removed.

When planting legumes, care should be taken to inoculate them properly.

In semiarid habitats, skip row planting may increase plant survival and reduce seed costs.

In addition to the establishment and maintenance of native openings, supplemental forages (food plots) can be managed to im-

prove diversity and production.

Planted food plots can provide a highly nutritious food source that can be beneficial to wildlife during periods of stress.

To minimize the distance that wildlife must travel, openings should be distributed across the property as much as possible.

It is always best to establish a variety of plantings to provide more diversity and to insure against the failure of one type of planting.

It is essential that food plots are properly fertilized and limed in order to receive the maximum benefit.

Each food plot should have a soil test in order to determine the correct lime and fertilizer rates.

Since late summer and late winter are often stressful periods of the year for wildlife, both warm season and cool season food plots can be established.

During the dry summer months, as plant growth slows, the nutrient levels in native vegetation are much lower than when the plants are actively growing during the spring.

Warm season plantings include cowpeas, alyceclover and

American jointvetch.

While alyceclover, jointvetch, and cowpeas are annuals, the jointvetch will reseed if it is allowed to produce seed and then mowed in the fall.

In order to insure proper growth, all warm season plantings should be planted on bottom-land sites (if possible) where soil moisture will be sufficient during the summer to insure proper growth.

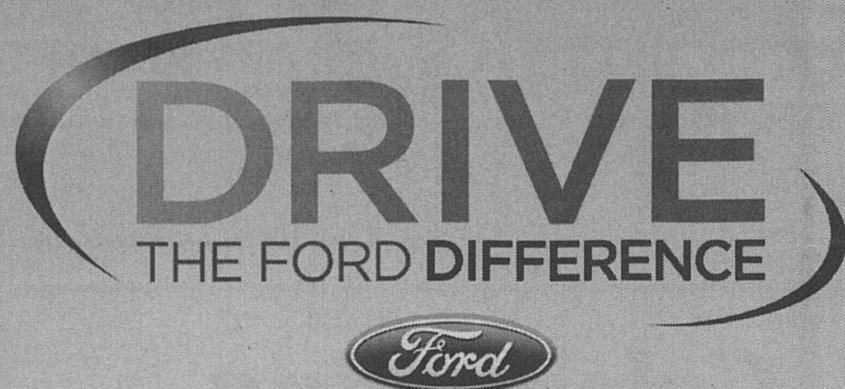
Cool season plantings include combinations of elbon rye, clovers, rye grass, and wheat.

Cereal grains such as rye and wheat will benefit quail, turkeys, and songbirds in the spring.

Planting food plots is an excellent way to improve available nutrition, increase the carrying capacity and concentrate wildlife on your property.

Food plots do not take the place of habitat management in general, but are intended to augment the quantity and quality of food occurring naturally in an area.

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## Texas Crop Weather Report

Without rain and with temperatures soaring to the high 90s or topping 100, large parts of the state continued to suffer drought-like conditions, reported Texas AgriLife Extension Service personnel.

Conditions in the North, South Plains, Rolling Plains and Panhandle regions were better as far as soil moisture levels were concerned.

Soils in the Rolling Plains were saturated, and North Texas welcomed drier weather after deluges of rain in early May.

To varying degrees, the East, Central, Coastal Bend, Far West, Southwest and West Central regions were beginning to dry out again after some relief earlier in June.

But by far, the worst hit regions were South and Southeast Texas as the drought relentlessly hammered crops and livestock.

"Hot temperatures have taken a toll on range and pasture conditions as soil moisture has evaporated," said Isaac Cavazos, AgriLife Extension agent in McMullen County, between Laredo and San Antonio.

"Stock tank water levels remain very low, and most herds are obtaining water through water wells which are limited in the area."

"Conditions continue to be extremely dry and hot," said Joe Janak, AgriLife Extension agent

in Victoria County, south of San Antonio.

"Cattle producers are starting to feed cattle due to insufficient forage.

Hay is being made in selected areas that received a little rainfall in past weeks, but yields are generally only a half round bale per acre."

"Dry conditions continue to wreak havoc with crops and pastures," said Ron Holcomb, AgriLife Extension agent in Liberty County, northeast of Houston. "Hay baling is minimal now due to the lack of rain.

Pasture conditions continue to deteriorate without rain.

Livestock are faring okay for now, but as the drought worsens livestock will worsen due to the lack of pasture and water."

"Range and pasture conditions continue to decline due to no topsoil moisture," said George L. Gonzales, AgriLife Extension agent for Webb County, near Laredo.

"Stock tank levels are also declining or totally dried up.

Windmills and water wells are being used on many ranches as the main source of livestock water."

More information on drought in Texas can be found on the Web site of the Drought Joint Information Center at <http://agrilife.tamu.edu/drought/>.

### HOW'S YOUR TECHNIQUE?

Not sure if you're flossing correctly? Here are the steps for the best method. Keep in mind that dentists suggest daily flossing as a goal.

1. With your hands a few inches apart, wind about 18 inches of floss (a waxed floss is best) around both of your middle fingers.
2. Slide the floss delicately between your teeth to the gum line, curving the floss into a C-shape so you can rub each side of each tooth gently. Never snap the floss into the gums because this can cause bleeding and injure the teeth and gums.
3. Don't forget to floss the backs of your last teeth and molars; plaque can accumulate there too.

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