



The Importance of Oak Trees on Your Hunting Ground

The key to seeing more deer on your land is habitat. Oak trees are the number one habitat tree, not only for deer, but many other types of wildlife as well. Oaks are beneficial in the form of protection, shelter, and food. Typical food plots will only offer food during short periods of time throughout the year. Established trees however can offer food year round with very little input from you.



Acorns are a staple of the deer diet they contain a high level of carbohydrates which allow deer to put on much needed fat for the winter months. Deer will seek out acorns from the white oak family first due to their lower tannic acid content, which causes the acorn to be much sweeter, therefore it is the preferred acorn for most deer.



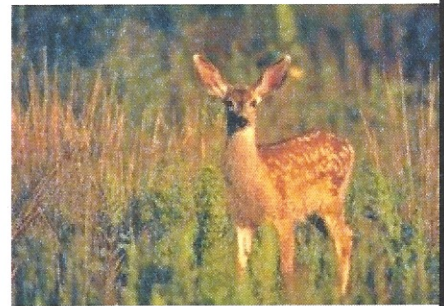
However, due to the lower acid level acorns tend to rot much quicker once they hit the ground, providing a food source for only a couple of weeks. Acorns of white oaks mature in a six month cycle, usually having a crop every year.

Red oak acorns usually drop later in the season. Higher tannic acid levels make the acorn taste more bitter to the deer, causing them to be sought after once the white oak crop is depleted. With the higher acid level red oak acorns do not rot as rapidly as the white creating a food source well into the

winter months. Red oak acorns mature in an eighteen month cycles. Usually two sets of acorn can be seen on the tree, the current years crop and the previous years crop that will drop in the coming fall.

When planting oak trees diversity between the white and red family is key to having an acorn crop year after year.

During spring and summer months the acorns that survive produce seedlings that the deer can browse until acorns start to fall again. Leaves are higher in protein content which is a major part of antler development as well as reproducing.



Below is a list of recommended oak species for Nebraska.

White Oak Family

- White Oak - *Quercus alba*
- Swamp White Oak - *Q. bicolor*
- Bur Oak - *Q. macrocarpa*
- Chinkapin Oak - *Q. muehlenbergii*
- English Oak - *Q. robur*
- Dwarf Chinkapin Oak - *Q. prinoides*
- Sawtooth Oak - *Q. acutissima*

Red Oak Family

- Red Oak - *Q. rubra*
- Shingle Oak - *Q. imbricaria*
- Shumard Oak - *Q. shumardii*
- Black Oak - *Q. velutina*