

EARLY SEASON TACTICS

with Proven Results

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We could all agree that the old saying “I’d rather be lucky than good any day” has a great bit of truth to it, mainly because sometimes merely being a good hunter doesn’t always pay off if preparations aren’t made beforehand. Also, one must give credit when credit is due, and when a hunter seems to have repetitive luck time and time again, one must wonder if the term luck is indeed more of a preparation meeting opportunity than a blind hog finding an acorn every now and then. Shane Saxton, whitetail enthusiast, management expert, and developer of Saxton Food Plot Blends, shares 5 tactics that are discussed below and the results, well they speak for themselves. Here are 5 simple tips



that are certain to aid in harvesting your trophy this upcoming season.

FIND THE FOOD!

If there's one thing all hunters agree on, it's that food sources are vital to the success, or lack thereof, of harvesting whitetail deer. When September arrives the local feed stores will be flooded with traffic from hunters rushing to get seed in the ground. The roadways will echo the hum of mud tires and four wheel drive trucks. Trailers loaded down with tractors and implements with frequent almost every two lane road as hunters make a dashing sprint to ready their property for the upcoming season. Like most of us, busy with life, we rush to our



property in Mid-September, and the race is on to clean those roads, check and hangs stands, prepare food plots, and the other necessities to assure a pleasurable hunting season. And most have pretty good luck in that approach come November once the plots are up and the deer are acclimated to the disturbance of their once quiet summer time living quarters. Great fall and winter food plots are essential to attracting deer and providing them with the habitat to allow them to reside on and around your property. But for the avid bow hunter who yearns for early season success, could there be more? The goal, or intent, is to figure out a way to bag that early season buck, and that's hard to do when the acorns aren't falling yet and you have no food on your property.

Insanity, it has been said, is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. If you want to change your early season luck, change how you prepare. Planning to kill big bucks doesn't start a month before hunting season. It starts when you realize that you are creating year around habitat and take action to enforce it. It's pretty simple actually; food, water, cover. We've all heard it, but somehow we often fail to enforce it. Maybe you're one of the few that are fortunate enough to have access to hunting agricultural fields in the early bow season. If so, you're well on your way to a potentially successful archery season.

For the rest of us, a plan needs to be taken to ensure food is readily available throughout the summer months and extending into the fall. A great route for this food source is a good stand of perennial clover that will provide abundant grazing for local deer, thus lessening the need for them to travel large distances in search of more desirable vegetation. Hunting in an area with minimal pressure, great management practices, thick cover, and add to that year around food sources, you've got a recipe for success that can't be beat. Shane has been

an avid hunter all of his life and has carried his knowledge and experience to aid in providing great food sources to keep deer on your property and give them not only the food they crave, but also the nutrition to make great gains each upcoming year. Shane has developed several food plot blends that if planted in the fall, will provide a food source within 14 days (assuming rain cooperation) and will continue as a perennial food source as long as it is maintained properly. While most are scrambling to get food plots in the ground in mid-September, you will have provided your bucks with a food source they've been feeding on all summer. And since they have been there feeding frequently during the summer months, your chances at success the first few sits of the season increases dramatically. Check out some of the results from the Saxton Food Plot Blends below.

SCOUTING

Assuming you have been proactive and made a positive step in establishing a year around food source and you've maintained it properly, or have access to agricultural ground, you're now in the game. It's time to be smart, to start strategizing, planning, and making preparations to aid in potential success. It is true that scouting by foot is a good tool to learn new terrain and find travel routes. However, try to do this as early as possible. A mature deer will reside in an area that he feels safe, and if he's bumped from his area numerous times, he will likely exit the area and find somewhere with less human activity. The less disturbed your area is and the less you make your presence known, the greater your chances are of seeing your trophy in daylight hours.

If possible, take advantage of scouting from afar. Glassing fields from long distances have a huge advantage for patterning travel routines of deer on your property. In early season when days are long, mature bucks will still be frequenting food sources in the daylight hours so take advantage of this opportunity. It is no secret that when



deer lose their velvet, their patterns change. Adding human scent to their afternoon café will drastically hurt your chances. Try to avoid lots of cutting and obvious disturbance of the area. Deer, especially mature deer, will notice even the slightest changes. So hang that set as early in the summer as possible, or at very least prep (trim, etc.) early on to give the deer time to get back accustomed to the change and then stay out as much as possible.

Trail cameras have made leaps and bounds with the advancement of technology and reliability, providing great scouting opportunities with minimal disturbance of your area. They have changed the scouting world and are one of the best ways to locate and monitor deer in your area. However, this should be done carefully as well.

Avoid checking cameras during potential feeding times and try to limit those scouting trips to mid-day when deer are bedded if at all possible. When accessing to scout, try to be as scent free and quiet as possible. Again, the less your presence is known, the more relaxed and comfortable a big deer will be in the area and the likelihood of him staying there for a longer period of time will drastically increase. It only takes a few times of alertness to make him change his pattern.

TIMING IS KEY

You've done the physical work. You have provided a great food source for the deer you are hunting; your stand is set, and all scouting measures have been taken. All is in order and you have many deer frequenting your area. So, when do you hunt it? I've heard it

said that the best time to hunt is any time you can. I get it. Any time to be in God's creation is a great time to be there. However, factually speaking, if it is opening day and the wind is dead wrong and you go anyway, you are asking for failure. Sure, there have been many times I've heard of situations where people have a trophy deer come in downwind. However, more often than not, way more often than not, you are going to get busted and mess your honey hole up for period of time. Be smart. Hunt it when the conditions are favorable and you'll have a much better experience.

Also, if you've got your target buck on camera at 6:00 A.M. consistently, that's great. But chances are when you walk into that area at 5:45 A.M. you're going to bust him out of there. Remember, you hunt deer at their destination, or in route to it, not at their present location.

You cannot kill a giant buck if a giant buck doesn't exist in your area

The simple fact of the matter is that it is impossible to kill the buck of a lifetime if the buck of a lifetime doesn't exist in your hunting vicinity. How to grow big bucks? Well, that's a totally separate discussion, but to hit on the high points you need age, genetics, and a well-balanced habitat with everything a whitetail needs to want to stay there and have an abundance of protein rich foods to help grow him to full potential.

Management practices have grown exponentially over the past several decades. From early management practices of 6 point or better to 8 point or better to 16 inch spread or better, all the way to aging deer for quality standards. Knowledge of these characteristics have improved trophy potential dramatically. Where three year old bucks were once considered mature, now that age has moved into the 4, 5, and even 6 year old class animal (though older than this is difficult to determine on the hoof). There was a time when it was thought that a 4 year old buck had reached his





ultimate potential, but now we are seeing bucks continue to grow into true giants at 5 and 6 plus years of age.

One must know that a trophy is truly in the eyes of the beholder, but if one desires to hunt for a 5 year old animal, he must restrict himself from harvesting younger bucks.

ENJOY THE PROCESS

If you're anything like me, creating and maintaining a comfortable habitat for the animals we pursue is more of a hobby than a job. Sure, it takes a lot of work, but the rewards from a hard day's work make the end result much more appreciated. I will also add that maintaining a continuous food source (clipping, spraying, etc.) once every few months are actually much less stressful than the September Sprint. I urge you to enjoy the process and the

give thanks to our Creator that you are healthy enough to get your hands dirty and make a place better than you found it. That's what it's about. The antler score will one day be forgotten, the pictures will fade, but the memories

made will last a lifetime. May your hunts be measured by the size of the memory, and know that all your hard work culminating in an arrow being launched that finds its mark is icing on the cake. Good hunting and God bless!



For more information on Saxton Food Plot Blends Contact Shane Saxton by phone @ 601-540-5040, or Email at Saxton21@yahoo.com