

## Food Plot Option: the 'permanent' wildlife food plot

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Throughout the year, I'm often contacted by landowners that have questions about their food plot projects and their frequent frustrations over not producing the food plot results they originally had in mind. When those discussions happen, I run the landowner through the "Food Plot Test". The "Food Plot Test" consists of asking a series of questions.

If you answer "Yes" to 4 or more of these questions, we've got a new alternative for you to consider:

1. Do you lack the time or equipment to perform cultivation, fertilizing and spraying your food plot?
2. Do you have a hard time getting traditional food plot mixes to grow in your soil conditions?
3. Do you struggle getting traditional food plot mixes to grow in your moisture conditions?
4. Do you typically plant your food plots and then walk away?
5. Do you want to place food plots in the same location each year?
6. Are your management goals to provide great pheasant and quail habitat?
7. Are you interested in food plots that will naturally reoccur year after year once established?
8. Are you interested in food plots that can be established by broadcast seeding?
9. Do deer often eat your food plots before they can provide the desired benefit to birds?

If your answer was "Yes" to at least 4 of these questions, you should consider planting your next food plot to Giant Ragweed. Giant Ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*) is a native, annual plant that grows from 3' to 12' tall. It goes by many names, but this plant common plant across most of the country is a powerhouse when it comes to producing seeds that are valuable to native wildlife, especially upland gamebirds like pheasants, quail and prairie chickens. A summary of many seed types found that Ragweed seed provided the highest usable energy value of any seed type evaluated.....even higher than the traditional food plot types.

Seed Type	Usable Energy
Ragweed	110
Corn	109
Soybeans	109
Grain Sorghum	107
Common Sunflower	103
German Millet	98
Korean Lespedeza	89

Seed Type	Usable Energy
Wheat	87
Thistle	77
Hemp	71
Partridge Pea	68
Smartweed	65
Switchgrass	53

Source: 'On Bobwhites' by Fred Guthery. Page 55



Giant Ragweed is a naturally occurring plant through the pheasant and quail range that will produce seeds of excellent value as well as the type of growth that provides brood-rearing and fall cover that birds will benefit from. The Giant Ragweed food plots in these photos have been recurring for 6 years with little to no management on them.

Considering a food plot of Giant Ragweed will offer the following advantages to consider:

1. Providing a food source that has some of the highest usable energy values for wildlife: a key bonus to getting birds through the winter in better physical condition to produce increased nesting results the following spring.
2. A food plot that can be established with simple disking and broadcast seeding as well as traditional planting with a drill.
3. Once planted, you can walk away and not have to cultivate, fertilize and spray. The plant is an early succession species and will perform well in conditions with minimal attention and management. In addition, it will do well in many soil types including sandy and poor soil types.
4. While an annual plant, Giant Ragweed can be encouraged to return year after year as your food plot with a simple light disking. In personal habitat projects, Giant Ragweed plots have consistently maintained themselves for 6 years with little to no management.
5. Giant Ragweed is typically not attractive to deer, so these food plots should easily be around in the fall and through winter for upland game birds.

Giant ragweed seed is available through Pheasants Forever (one of the few places you can actually buy the seed) at a price of \$28.38 per pound. That sounds expensive, but when you consider the savings associated with time, spraying, fertilizing and multiple years of benefits, it's probably the least expensive food plot you can plant! Orders can be placed at [www.NebraskaPF.com](http://www.NebraskaPF.com) or by calling 308-428-3062. This seed source is available along with wide choices of traditional food plot mixes, grasses, wildflowers and legume seed.

Give this 'Permanent' Food Plot option a try this year. You'll be surprised at how easy it is to make this one of your most productive food plots on the property.