



Wildlife Conservation Land Program Wildlife Reserve Management Activity

SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD



NCWRC

Various species of agricultural crops can be planted to increase food availability for wildlife. Grains, tubers, legumes, and brassicas can be incorporated into the management of a property to improve wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities.



Activity Description

Establishing plants to increase food available for wildlife and beneficial insects can greatly improve opportunities for viewing native fauna. Planting herbaceous agricultural species, native wildflowers, or mast (fruit or nut) producing trees/shrubs can meet specific goals and objectives a landowner may have for their property. Not only do wildlife feed directly on the foliage and mast produced by the supplemental food plantings, insects attracted to these plantings can serve as a critical source of protein for insectivorous species. The following items will be considered when developing a Wildlife Habitat Conservation Agreement (WHCA) which includes Supplemental Food as a qualifying management activity for the Wildlife Reserve Land (WRL) criterion.

Placing or broadcasting grain, salt, minerals, pelletized feeds, or other food items on the property does not meet the requirements of this management activity.

HERBACEOUS AGRICULTURAL SPECIES, such as legumes, grains, brassicas, and tubers can provide food sources for wildlife during various times of the year. Annual species grow for a single season of the year and typically must be replanted each year. Perennial species have a lifespan more than a single year but require maintenance to ensure they persist. Feeding pressure and soil fertility can impact the growth, vigor, and persistence of herbaceous food plots. Soil sampling and application of soil amendments is necessary to maintain a productive food plot. Information on various food plot establishment and management techniques can be found in Dr. Craig Harper's publication [Landowners' Guide to Wildlife Food Plots \(PB 1874\)](#). Allowing an annual plot to stand fallow during a portion of the year can provide cover for nesting and brooding activities. Grains and legumes, such as corn, wheat, sorghum, and soybeans, grown as part of this WRL activity are not to be harvested or removed from the plot where they were grown.

NATIVE WILDFLOWERS can provide an excellent source of nectar and pollen to feed beneficial insects. In addition, native wildflowers can serve as host plants for larva of various species of insects. Many of these insects require very specific host plants for their larva to feed on and their life cycles cannot be completed without their specific host plants. Some species of native plants take multiple years to become established. During this period, the plants develop an extensive root system, but above ground growth is limited. Due to this



MELISSA MCGAW/NCWRC

Native wildflowers can provide critical sources of nectar and pollen for beneficial insects. Diverse mixtures of wildflowers will allow for these resources to be available throughout the year. These plantings also provide cover and serve as host plants for many species of pollinators and beneficial insects. Fruits and nuts produced by trees and shrubs are referred to as mast. Native species such as Chickasaw plum, elderberry, crabapple, and hazelnut are good options to benefit wildlife. Domestic species such as apple and pear can be planted to attract wildlife as well. Select species and varieties to extend blooming period and mast availability.



**1722 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH, NC 27699-1700
(919) 707-0050
NCWILDLIFE.GOV**

growth pattern active site preparation is needed where native wildflowers are to be planted. Site preparation may include both chemical and mechanical means to control the existing vegetation and deplete the weed seeds lying dormant in the soil. North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) staff can provide specifications for site preparation, planting, and maintenance needs.

FRUIT PRODUCING TREES AND SHRUBS offer an opportunity to provide food sources for a wide range of wildlife while serving as a source of pollen and nectar for beneficial insects. The fruits produced by these trees and shrubs are referred to as mast. Soft mast includes fleshy fruits and berries while hard mast is commonly referred to as nuts. Domestic or native species may be established to meet the Supplemental Food activity requirements. Existing orchards or planted trees/shrubs can qualify as supplemental food, however managing volunteer plants should be included in the Habitat Control activity. It is recommended that native species be utilized in these plantings whenever possible to provide host plants for native insects. Potted or bareroot plants may be used to establish mast producing species. It may be necessary to install fencing or “tree tubes” on planted trees and shrubs to reduce the impact of herbivory and physical damage. A small portion of the fruit produced from these plantings may be collected for personal use by the landowner, but most fruit should be left for wildlife consumption. No commercial sale of fruit, nuts, or other mast is allowed as part of a qualifying WHCA. NCWRC staff can offer detailed recommendations for establishing mast producing trees and shrubs.

Supplemental food can increase vegetation diversity and food availability to wildlife on a tract of land. To ensure these food sources remain productive during the life of the WHCA appropriate site preparation, establishment, and maintenance techniques are required. The scale and management recommendations outlined in the WHCA must be adhered to and practices implemented must be recorded in the Supplemental Food activity log. Additionally, it is suggested that progress be documented with photos.

