

Turnip Food Plots

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Purple Top White Globe
Turnips

Purple Top White Globe turnips make a great fall and winter food source for whitetail deer. We have grown these for several year and have developed some expertise in growing them. We have been involved in turnip food plots in both western New York State and northern Georgia. In both geographies, the turnips are grown as a fall and winter food source, planted in the fall. The timing of planting depends on the geography. In NY State, they are planted in mid July – mid August. In Georgia, they can be planted anytime from about September 1st through November 1st. Always follow the planting dates listed on the seed source label. Turnips can be grown as a nurse crop for clover with fall seeded turnips, a brassica mix, radishes or with winter killed oats.



Purple Top White Globe
Turnips in New Seedling
Clover

Turnips need light to grow but will grow with some shade in the early morning and late afternoon. As with any food plot, it is important to pick a spot where the deer will feel comfortable coming out into the plot during the early morning, before sunset, or even during the day. Turnips germinate quickly once they have moisture for germination and will grow quickly once germinated. We do not normally use a herbicide in turnip plots because they grow so fast that they dominate other weed species. Grass weeds are the easiest to control with a post applied herbicide like sethoxdim or clethodim. Always follow label directions when using herbicides.



A great location for a
turnip & brassica food plot
located in a clearing with

good sunlight penetration

The turnips can also be grown separately as an individual crop. When seeding alone or with other food plot varieties, it is important to use the correct amount of seed. Using too much seed results in too many plants, small tubers and if planted with a clover, will shade out the clover resulting in a poor stand of clover.



This plot was planted with too much seed resulting in overcrowding and small turnip globes

Turnips, Brassicas, Radishes, and winter killed oats all require fertilizer to attain their full potential. A fertilizer application prior to planting is required to achieve this goal. If this is a new plot or you are unsure what your fertility levels are, a soil test will be a great help. When you get the soil test results, it will also indicate if lime is required to adjust your soil pH. If you don't have time to do this, an application of a basic NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorous, Potassium) fertilizer will get you in the ball park. Sixty pounds of Nitrogen should provide a season long supply of basic plant nutrients for an average food plot crop.

Fertilizer Required per Acre to Apply 60 Lbs. of Actual NPK

(Nitrogen, Phosphorous, Potassium)

10-10-10 – 600 lbs/a

12-12-12 – 500 lbs/a

13-13-13 – 460 lbs/a

15-15-15 – 400 lbs/a



A Feast of Turnips!

If given space and nutrients to grow the turnips can grow to be quite large. Don't forget to eat a few yourself. Purple Top White Globe turnips for deer food plots are the same as you would buy in the grocery store and much fresher!! My favorite way to eat them is raw right in the field. Just pull up the turnip, cut off the surface layer with a pocket knife, cut into slices like an apple and enjoy!! Turnips have a great slightly sweet flavor. You can also take them home and cook the diced globe, with the chopped green tops, along with a little ham, for a nice side dish of Turnip Greens & Ham.



Purple Top White Globe Turnips in New Seedling Clover

The deer will start to feed as the weather gets cooler. The deer usually start by eating the best part of the globes and then coming back for more as food sources diminish. The cool weather helps preserve the globes from rotting as long as it doesn't get too warm for too long. If there is no snow and the temperatures get extremely cold the food value of the turnips will be destroyed. If there is snow cover or more moderate temperatures, the food value will be preserved longer.



Beginning Feeding on Turnips

As winter approaches spring, if there is any food value left, the deer will eat the frozen turnips like ice cream, only leaving a white cup in the ground. At other times the whole turnip will come out of the ground so they can eat the whole globe. When there are enough globes left at the end of winter it is a good source of food when the deer come back in the spring from herding.



Spring turnip in fall seeded clover eaten to the ground

We have tried to grow turnips and Daikon Radishes together in NY State but we have observed that the radish flesh is destroyed by cold temperatures easier than the turnips. Sometimes the food value is mostly gone by gun season and no longer an attraction to the deer. For this reason, we are no longer planting radishes in food plots in NY State. The daikon radish plots in Georgia are normally very successful due to the milder fall and winter temperatures.



Feeding on Daikon Radishes and Turnips