

Suggestions for Successful Wildlife Plantings

- Favor trees and shrubs that produce seed, berry and fruits, because these species have high value for wildlife. Plants such as dogwood, chokecherry and ninebark which hold their mast, berries or fruit through the winter and early spring supply wildlife with a food source throughout the critical winter period.
- Conifers provide an important source of winter cover for wildlife. These should be included within a planting scheme.
- Restore previously disturbed sites by planting trees, shrubs or permanent cover crops.
- Vary plant cover in fence rows, windbreaks and yards to create multilayered habitat.
- Establish living fence rows of trees, shrubs or vines around field boundaries to reduce soil erosion, retain soil moisture and provide food, cover and travel lanes for wildlife.
- Fence woodlots and designated wildlife habitat areas to prevent trampling, soil compaction and overgrazing of vegetation by livestock.

Project Planning

Your district forester can provide you with a detailed project plan for improving your woodland and surrounding property for specific wildlife.

Whether your goal is to improve your property for hunting or just to attract wildlife, a long-term plan should be developed to address the changing nature of your woodland and the habitat quality that it provides.

Contact a DNR Forester for an on-site visit and evaluation of your woodland wildlife habitat, or visit: www.iowadnr.com/forestry/

To order tree and shrub seedlings, contact the State Forest Nursery at 800-865-2477 or order online at www.iowatreeplanting.com.



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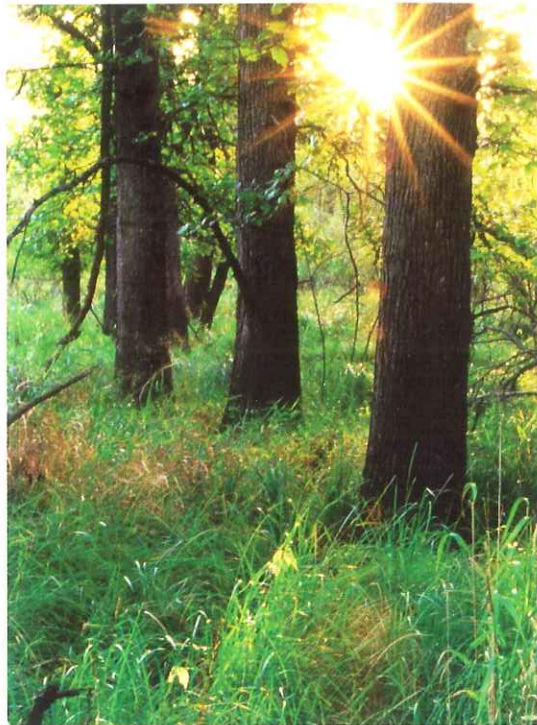
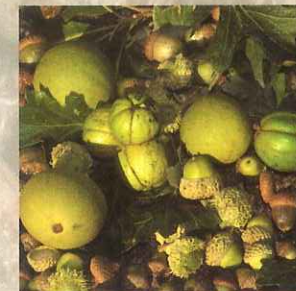


Photo by Bruce Blair, Iowa DNR

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Woodland Wildlife Habitat Improvement Guide



Wildlife Habitat Overview

Most non-grazed Iowa woodlands and surrounding openings are excellent habitat for a variety of birds and animals if there is a diversity of overstory tree species and understory vegetation.

As vegetative structures of woodlands change over time, the diversity of the woodland will change, and some species of birds and animals will benefit more than others.

To optimize habitat development for the widest range of bird and animal species, concentrate on maintaining as much vegetative diversity in the woodland as possible. To make improvement for individual species, the special needs of those species will have to be met by targeting precise woodland management activities in specific areas.



Red oak acorns are a great food source for wildlife species.

Wildlife populations fluctuate in response to available habitat. Managing habitat to provide the best and most food, cover and water is the most cost effective way to increase and sustain wildlife populations.

For Neotropical migratory bird habitat, optimize general wildlife habitat diversity with fully stocked wooded areas with well-developed mid-story layers of woody vegetation.

Woodland openings, especially along ridgetops, add wildlife “edge” for species of birds and animals needing those habitat requirements. Improving habitat for deer, turkeys and squirrels requires

keeping large, mature trees for nut and acorn production and roosting, along with thickets of heavy cover for ground nesting, hiding and rearing young.

Woodland wildlife habitat can be improved for different species by periodic brush cutting, understory burning, firewood cutting, selective tree thinning and tree harvesting. In addition, leave active den and nesting trees in the woodland as long as possible before cutting them for sawtimber or fuelwood.

The following practices will benefit deer and turkey specifically, as well as many other game and non-game wildlife species:

Grow Plenty of Nuts and Acorns

Seed produced by nut-bearing trees such as oaks and hickories are critical fall and winter food sources for wildlife. Acorns, especially white oaks, are preferred by deer and turkeys. Grow oaks and hickories as large as possible and retain them in the woodland for as long as possible before harvesting. At least 20 to 30 percent of a woodland should be kept in growing mixtures of mast-producing trees.

Shagbark hickories and red oaks begin to maximize seed production at 20 inches in diameter, while white oaks maximize seed production at around 26 inches in diameter. Black oaks increase seed production throughout their entire lifetime. Most oaks don't produce large quantities of acorns until they are 40 to 50 years old.

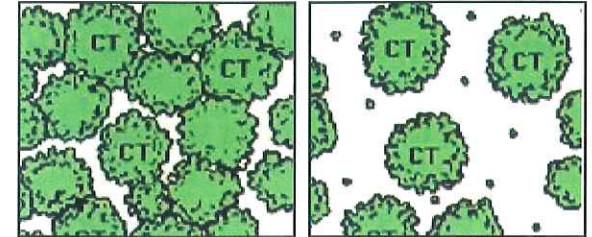
In addition, most oaks don't produce large seed crops every year. Red oaks have large seed crops every 3 to 5 years, black oaks every 2 to 3 years, and white oaks every 4 to 10 years. Due to the variability associated with seed producing, age and tree type, it is always desirable to favor a mixture of oak species.

Keep Turkey Roosting Trees

Retain scattered large diameter trees on ridgetops and along lowland drainage banks for roosting trees for turkeys.

Thin Woodlands to Improve Food and Cover

Thin to increase tree crown size for nut and acorn production (“mast”) and to encourage woodland understory development. Periodic thinning of crowded oaks and hickory crop trees can improve mast-production sevenfold by allowing expansion of the remaining tree crowns. To maximize acorn production, you should always try to maintain 22 to 25 dominant and co-dominant oaks per acre.



Aerial view of woodland before and after crop tree release treatment.

Periodic thinning will also improve understory vegetation. Increased vegetation and the cut trees and branches from thinning will greatly improve deer browse, deer fawning and turkey nesting. To maximize thinning effectiveness, begin selecting and releasing crop trees when they are 4 to 6 inches in diameter and evaluate the woodland for additional thinning needs at 8- to 10-year intervals following each thinning.

Brushy Areas are Good

Maintain brushy areas next to wooded edges for nesting, fawning and hiding cover. These areas can be kept brushy by periodically mowing or burning on 4- to 5-year cycles. Additional created openings of one-half to 5 acres in size, made long and narrow with irregular boundaries, will improve wildlife dispersion throughout the management area. At least 10 percent of the habitat area should be comprised of these types of openings. The openings can be maintained by 3- to 5-year cycles of burning or mowing.