Plantra® Wildlife Planting Project Guide

Your Comprehensive Roadmap to Enhance Your Property for Wildlife…Naturally

This guide will help you plan, execute, and maintain a successful wildlife enhancement project. Whether you're creating wildlife habitat, adding privacy, or building a legacy for future generations, proper planning is the foundation of long-term success.

Critical to successful wildlife planting is a plan to guide decision-making and action. Whether your aim is to establish permanent food plots, increase protective cover, protect riparian zones, or pursue other strategies to benefit wildlife, this guide provides essential topics to consider in your planning process.

Core Philosophy: At Plantra, we're committed to our "Plant Like You Mean It" principles to recommend only planting what you can properly protect and nurture through full establishment. Quality and proper care matter more than quantity.

Take time to collect the information outlined below and incorporate it into your plan. This focused approach will help your wildlife planting Survive, Thrive, and Succeed.

Phase 1: Pre-Planting Preparation

Start this phase at least one year before planting

1. Define Your Vision and Goals

Identify these at the beginning of the planning process, well ahead of breaking ground. This ensures your physical and financial resources are focused and prepares others to help, whether they be hired contractors or volunteers.

Purpose and Objectives

- **Why am I planting?**
  - Restore original native habitat?
  - Increase biodiversity?
  - Provide natural food sources and cover?
  - Attract specific wildlife species?
- ***What specific outcomes do I want?***
  - For the planting – survival, growth, stocking density (trees, shrubs, lowers story plants per unit of area), etc.
  - For wildlife – species composition, seasonal use by various species, etc.
  - Consider consulting with wildlife professionals to establish measurable benchmarks
- **When do I expect results?** Set realistic timelines:

    - Short-term (1-3 years)
    - Mid-term (3-5 years)
    - Long-term (5-10+ years)

2. Establish a Comprehensive Budget

Important principle: Only budget for the number of plants you can afford to protect and nurture through full establishment. Quality over quantity ensures success.

Budget Categories

- Site assessment and analysis
- Site preparation and soil work
- Plant materials
- Plant protection and growth products (grow tubes tree shelters, bark protectors, support stakes, weed control, etc.)
    - Budgeting these items upfront is more cost-effective than replanting damaged or lost seedlings
- Planting equipment and labor
- Ongoing aftercare and maintenance
- Professional fees (property surveys, tax advice, consulting)

3. Identify Specific Wildlife Requirements

Understanding your target species guides plant selection, layout, and land management strategies.

- Determine which wildlife species currently live in your area
- Target the species you want to attract and learn their habitat requirements

The Big Three: Food, Water, and Cover

- **Food sources**
    - Herbaceous forage
    - Woody plants for soft and hard mast production
    - Aquatic vegetation
- **Water**
    - Natural sources (streams, ponds, wetlands)
    - Man-made sources (water features, tanks)
- **Shelter and cover**
    - Bedding areas
    - Protection from predators and weather
    - Travel corridors
    - Nesting and rearing sites (natural or constructed, such as nest boxes and platforms)

4. Identify Additional Project Objectives

Beyond wildlife habitat, consider other benefits your planting can provide:

- Windbreak and soil retention
- Water quality improvement
- Aesthetics and privacy screening

- Recreation opportunities
- Financial investment
- Creating a family legacy

5. Conduct a Comprehensive Site Assessment

A baseline analysis of your property is essential for informed planning. Professional consultation can be valuable during this process.

Assessment Components

- Topographic maps and aerial photos showing property boundaries and existing vegetation
- Soil analysis and composition
- Wildlife survey and current habitat use
- Plant hardiness zone classification
- Cost-sharing program eligibility
- Potential threats to new plantings (both above and below ground)
- Supplemental water sources for drought conditions during establishment
- Existing and planned land use on adjacent properties
- Location of utilities (above and below ground)

6. Choose Plant Materials Based on Your Goals

Selecting a Nursery

Research potential nurseries and select a local supplier who can provide service before, during, and after planting.

Getting Professional Help

Consult with your nursery, land management professional, or wildlife biologist to:

- Match plant species to your specific region and site conditions
- Determine the best type of planting stock for your project
- Calculate how many seedlings you'll need (guided by your budget)
- Identify the optimal planting time for your area
- Select a diverse blend of species to extend benefits throughout the year
- Design optimal physical layout (edge creation, successional plantings, forest openings)
- Determine the best planting method (hand versus mechanical)

Ordering Stock

Order as early as possible—ideally the year before actual planting to ensure availability.

7. Decide: Do-It-Yourself or Professional Assistance

If Conducting Your Own Planting, Consider:

- Do I have the knowledge and skills to oversee the project? If not, can I acquire them in time?
- Do I have sufficient time to complete the job properly?
- Do I have the necessary site preparation and planting tools? If not, can I afford to acquire them?

- Do I have access to adequate labor?
- Do I have resources to safely transport and temporarily store seedlings after delivery?

If Hiring a Contractor, Evaluate:

- **Experience:** How long has the contractor been managing wildlife properties, including site preparation, planting, and follow-up care?
- **References:** Are client references readily available for your review?
- **Project assurance:** Will the contractor sign a contract specifying service prices and guaranteed results?
- **Insurance:** Does the contractor carry adequate general liability and equipment insurance?

8. Planting Site Preparation

Invasive Species and Competing Vegetation Control

Identify the control method best suited to your property and project:

- Mulching
- Grazing
- Manual removal (scalping with hand tools)
- Mechanical methods (mowing, tilling, disking)
- Controlled burning (confirm permit requirements with local authorities)
- Chemical treatment (always follow label instructions)

Additional Preparation Tasks

- Soil preparation and amendment
- Initial weed control
- Planting layout and marking
- Property line confirmation

9. Make Record Keeping an Integral Part of Your Project

Thorough documentation provides invaluable reference information for measuring performance and problem-solving.

- Photo and video documentation before project implementation and throughout goal achievement
- Budget tracking and review
- Planting log or diary to record activities, observations, and lessons learned

Phase 2: Planting Season

10. Develop a Planting Logistics Plan

- **Stock location and marking:** Layout and flag planting sites ahead of planting day
- **Transport and handling:** Consult with your nursery supplier about best practices for the specific plant materials you've selected
- **Labor scheduling:** Arrange help well in advance to ensure availability on planting day

11. Incorporate Plant Protection at Time of Planting

Essential protection measures ensure your new planting survives, thrives, and succeeds. Budget for these items to prevent loss or damage:

- **Tree tubes (shelters):** Protect nursery-grown seedlings, wild volunteer seedlings, and direct-seeded nuts and acorns
- **Bark protection:** Guard sapling trunks against antler rub and damage from rabbits and rodents
- **Fertilizer:** Continue nutrition from nursery to field for strong establishment
- **Weed barrier:** Prevent weed competition for sunlight, moisture, and nutrients
- **Rodent control:** Install gopher guards below ground, vole guards above ground encourage natural predators (owls, hawks, and terrestrial rodent predators)
- **Site monitoring:** Install precipitation gauges to determine if supplemental watering is needed; consider trail cameras to monitor wildlife use and human activity

Phase 3: Post-Planting Care

12. In the Field

Planting Inspection

- Survey to assess survival and growth (include photo and video documentation)
- Check condition of tree tubes, stakes, weed barrier fabric, and other protective supplies

Ongoing Maintenance

- Competing vegetation management
- Tree pruning and stand improvement
- Trail camera battery replacement as needed

13. Administrative and Record Keeping

Periodic Project Review

- Measure performance against original goals and objectives
- Compare actual expenditures to projected costs

Planting Assessment

- Document survival rates
- Track growth progress
- Identify and implement corrective measures if necessary

- Update project diary with findings and observations

Keys to Success

Remember These Core Principles *"To Plant Like You Mean It"* :

- **Plan thoroughly -** At least one year of preparation pays dividends
- **Plant realistically -** Only plant what you can properly protect and maintain through the full establishment phase
- **Protect your investment -** Grow tubes / tree shelters, barriers, and other aids are cost-effective insurance
- **Go native when possible -** Native plants thrive and are better adapted to your local conditions
- **Document everything -** Records help you learn and improve
- **Be patient -** Landscapes take time to mature

A well-planned project can create lasting value for wildlife, you, your community, and future generations. By following this guide and truly planting like you mean it, you'll ensure your new plantings don't just survive…they thrive and succeed.