

Seasonal Forage for White-Tailed Deer

1) WILD STRAWBERRY (*Fragaria vesca*) - Some of the first forbs to show as the snow melts in early spring. Leaves remain green through the winter making Strawberry easy forage on south facing slopes and in meadows long before new shoots sprout.

2) DANDELION (*Taraxacum officinale*) - Shortly after the snow melts Dandelion emerges. One cup of chopped, raw Dandelion greens (about 55g) has 25 calories, 1.5g of protein, 0.4g of fat, 5.1g of carbs, about 2g of fiber, and half a gram of sugar. Dandelion greens are also an excellent source of vitamin A, folate, vitamin K, and vitamin C, and a good source of calcium and potassium, all vitamins and minerals the deer needs to thrive in the spring.

3) RED OSIER DOGWOOD (*Cornus sericea*) - In the summer, deer love dogwood for the big juicy leaves and in the winter, for the woody browse. They also appreciate the Red Osier Dogwood as a good source of cover, as they can bed low, sheltered and hidden in those wetter habitats where the Osier Dogwood grows.

4) POISON IVY (*Toxicodendron radicans*) - Despite the effects of urushiol (the component that triggers all the blistering burning rashes) on people, deer are not affected. Their immune systems do not go into hyper defence when encountering urushiol, but instead nothing happens at all. Deer love poison ivy as a summer forb, as do many other mammals and birds.

5) BIRCH POLYPORE (*Fomitopsis betulina*) and other mushrooms - Mushrooms are particularly high in protein (16 -19%), phosphorus (average 0.75%), and potassium (average 2%) and yield high proportions of volatile fatty acids in the rumen. Available all year though especially late summer and early fall they make for a great meal for deer.

6) BUR OAK (*Quercus macrocarpia*) - Deer consumption of acorns is well known. The average acorn contains protein (6%), carbs (42%) and fats (52%), as well as the minerals calcium, phosphorus and potassium. Bur Oak acorns are big, bulky, and abundant, making it easier for the deer to bulk up before the long winter ahead.

7) EASTERN HEMLOCK (*Tsuga canadensis*) - Not only a good food source, due to this species' dense foliage and complex structure it is thought to reduce heat loss and increase the interception of snow. This makes it easier for deer to save energy which means it'll be easier to forage and to stay warm.

8) EASTERN WHITE CEDAR (*Thuja occidentalis*) - This is the most important food plant in the northern woods; the only plant in the North East which can sustain deer in the critical part of winter. Aside from food White Cedar also provides good thermal cover in the winter months similar to Eastern Hemlock.

