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Survival Food Series: Essential Trees, Bushes and Berries

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On December 18, 2009 @ 10:23 am

Category: Dietary Wellness, Survival Food

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In a homestead environment, a person wants the land to work for them as much as possible. Wildlife will play a large part as a food source if people are living this type of lifestyle. Venturing out to play the waiting game when hunting for food can be time consuming and at times, unsuccessful.

Positioning specific types of plants and trees that wildlife are naturally attracted to around the homestead property would be advantageous for any person looking for food or hunting wild game. There are many advantages to planting trees that attract wildlife.

- The wildlife that come to feed on these trees and bushes will be nourished by the fruits, but the animals will also fatten up as a result of making the food so available to the animals. And will make a great prize when hunted down.
- Additionally, if the trees or bushes are planted near a crop, these trees offer a tasty distraction for animals coming to feed on crops.
- Not only do the wild animals look to the trees and bushes for food, they will also use them for shelter and use the twigs and foliage for nest building.
- Most of these trees and bushes provide nourishment for humans as well. Many of the wild fruits can be used for jellies, jams, fresh juices, types of medicines and tasty snacks. The nuts from the trees can be ground up into powders and used in baking breads.

Like all types of plant life, it takes time for trees to mature enough to begin bearing fruits. Some of these types of trees and bushes can take up to 4-5 years before they begin bearing fruit. And there are some varieties that take even longer. Doing proper research on the type of tree or bush that is needed for the property and finding out what zone to plant them in are essential.

Five Trees That Attract Wildlife

Oak Trees- This tree is one of the most important sources of food for wildlife as it produces acorns that the animals eat. Wild animals will thrive in areas where there is an abundant supply of acorns and will the height of the trees for protection. Oak trees such as the sawtooth oak, turkey oak, blue jack oak, and the white oak provide food for wild game and wild birds to feed on when food is scarce in the Fall. If this type of tree is around, animals such as duck, wild goose, squirrel, opossum, raccoon, wild boar, and deer will be there. The sawtooth oak tree is the fastest tree in producing acorns. In five years, the tree will be mature enough to begin bearing it's fruit.

Nut Trees- Nut trees such as the chestnut tree, chinquapin tree, hickory tree and pecan tree are known for attracting wildlife, especially squirrels, birds, boars, deer and sometimes bears. The nuts from these trees can also be used for human consumption. In fact, American Indians would grind the chestnuts and hickory nuts into a powder and used it to make breads. Deer use the thick canopy of pecan trees as shelter and can regularly be seen underneath these trees even in early spring, feeding on late maturing nuts.

Wild Fruit Trees- Having wild fruit trees in abundance not only provide edible food for humans and animals, but they also attract needed pollinators such as bees and hummingbirds. The crab apple tree, mayhaw tree, mulberry tree, pear tree, persimmon tree and plum tree offer food for animals such as the deer, quail, goose, pheasant, and turkey. Most of the fruit from these trees can make tasty jams, jellies, and fillings for pies. Plum

trees have a tendency to produce fruit faster than the others. The plum tree will bear it's fruit in 4-5 years. Planting a persimmon tree will ensure that the bucks and does will be present for the fruits. Mayhaw fruits are also great for making mayhaw jelly. Some believe this is the best type of jelly that can be made.

Wild Berry Bushes- Berry bushes such as blueberry, strawberry, elderberry and blackberry are not only humans favorite types of berries, they are the wildlife's favorite as well. Normally, wildlife hunters plant strawberry bushes around their hunting zones to attract whitetail deer who love to eat the leaves. In fact, the deer love these leaves so much they will strip the leaves off the bushes in the fall during hunting season. Deer prefer the leaves of the strawberry bush over corn or any other food, for that matter. The wild strawberry bush is relished by waterfowl, quail, turkey, ruffed grouse, rabbit, deer, bear, raccoon, squirrel and fox. Turkey and other types of wild fowl will gather around the bushes when the strawberry fruit begin to ripen. Blackberry thickets are another good berry plant to have around the property for attracting wildlife. Ground nesting birds, such as quail often use the thorny blackberry thickets as nesting areas.

Wild Grapes – If wild grapes is on the property, wild life will be drawn to the sweet fragrance this fruit gives off and will go the distance to eat some. Quail especially love muscadine grapes. This wild grape grows so many fruits that there would be enough for human consumption and plenty left over for deer, quail, opossum, raccoons and song birds. When the grapes ripen, quail will migrate in large masses to feed on the fruit. When planting grapevines for wildlife feeding, one could also interplant other native fruit tree varieties such as plum trees, and persimmon trees. The grape vines will intertwine with these fruit trees and create a private screening effect for the animals to come and feed. This privacy will make all deer, turkey and quail feel safe to feed.

Trees can provide more than just shade for homes. Finding the right kind of trees will keep wildlife returning throughout the year in search for food. Having a readily available food for wild game to feed on in the fall, winter and spring will keep the wildlife healthy, provide them needed nutrition during the months were food is scarce, and keep them coming back to the property so the hunter does not have venture out to search too far for them.

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