

# BRANCHING OUT

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Hunting Leases</i>	2
<i>Manage for Deer</i>	2
<i>Trails</i>	3
<i>Bat House</i>	4



The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices, and consumer behavior. FSC® certified by the Rainforest Alliance



The mark of responsible forestry

# columbia FOREST PRODUCTS™

## THE WHITE OAK

White oak is one of the more important oaks in our forests. The wood is valuable for both lumber and veneer. You can find it in flooring, cabinets, and high-end furniture. It is the preferred species for cooperage (barrel making) and in the last few years has been sought after worldwide by wine makers.

White oak acorns are highly prized by wildlife in the forest. A white oak tree doesn't produce consistent acorn crops until around age 40 to 50 years. Good acorn crops occur in 4 out of every 10 years. Deer and wild turkey often seek out this food source.

This species grows throughout the eastern US on a wide range of soils and sites. Depending on the region, white oak makes up between 10 and 12 percent of the forest. They are considered intermediate in shade tolerance and often occur in pure stands (comprising 80% of the forest).

Forest landowners often try to leave some mature white oak trees during harvesting operations due to the benefit they provide for wildlife. Their value for veneer however is important to consider

for generating management returns. As is often the case in forestry, there is some skill involved in finding the right balance between management goals.

Even age silviculture is most suitable for favoring white oaks. Harvesting of mature oaks needs to be timed with abundant acorn production. Seedling production will occur during the next year or two. Once white oak seedlings are established, then overstory management or harvesting can occur. Ideally, you are waiting on seedlings to reach poles sizes (1 to 3 inch diameters) before harvesting mature trees. On good sites, white oaks can reach maturity in 60 to 80 years; over 100 years on poorer sites.



Leaves of *Quercus alba*, white oak

*Hunting leases create annual income streams that can help offset taxes and management costs in between timber harvests*

## HUNTING LEASES

Taxes and expenses of owning land come due each year regardless of timber income.

One of the ways that landowners generate annual income from forestland is through hunting leases. People are willing to pay for the hunting rights to forestland, particularly if there is abundant wildlife on site. Hunting leases span from \$2/acre to \$20/acre annually depending on a wide range of property characteristics.

There are several things to consider in order to ensure a

successful hunting lease partnership.

**Access:** Higher fees are paid for hunting leases for land with good access. Landowners are expected to allow roads to be used. Hunters are expected to stay on existing roads and not create new trails without permission. Access should be controlled with gates and property lines should be posted.

**Food plots:** Most hunters like to plant food plots to attract wildlife, particularly whitetail deer. Small acreag-

es (1/2 to 1 acre) need to be cleared for planting food plots. Landowners and hunters need to negotiate how many and where they are located as part of the lease agreement.

**Insurance and contracts:** Landowners who sell hunting leases need to carry general liability insurance to protect themselves from accidents that occur with others on their property.

Continued on page 3—  
Hunting Leases cont.

## MANAGING FOR WHITETAIL DEER

Deer, like other animals of the forest, require food, water, and cover/shelter for optimum habitat. In the southeast, there is abundant habitat across the landscape for deer. But how do you make sure that your forestland encourages deer to wander through it?

First, evaluate the landscape surrounding your property and see if it is lacking food, water, or shelter. Focus your management efforts on any resources that are scarce in the region.

**Food:** Deer need vegetation close to the ground. Old growth stands generally lack vegetation down low where deer can reach it. Forests that have been thinned enough for sunlight to reach the forest floor provide the most vegetation and herbs for deer to browse on. As

part of your forest management for deer, be sure to leave mature hard mast trees, particularly white oak and chestnut oak, in the overstory. 1 to 3 acre openings created by group select cuts create brushy cover and low browse. This type of harvesting also creates good edges for wildlife.

If you have pasture, consider planting some of it in corn or clover and leaving it for the deer. Food plots are often effective at drawing deer into your forest and there is lots of information at state extension on how to create them.

**Water:** Water is often overlooked in wildlife management. Deer prefer quiet areas such as slow sections of creeks or small ponds. Creating a small 6 foot in diameter feature will attract deer and other wildlife to it if wa-

ter is limiting in the area. Creating rainwater catch basins in areas of your forest that do not have a water source can attract deer to areas they might otherwise avoid.

**Cover/shelter:** Deer prefer to move in the cover of forest, so leaving wildlife corridors across your property will be beneficial to keeping deer on your property. Connecting feeding, bedding, and water areas with forested corridors greatly enhances this effect. If you have hardwood forests, planting a 5 to 10 acre section in white pine or yellow pine can create winter cover for whitetails.

Lastly, controlling hunting and trespassing on your property is beneficial to controlling deer populations. Be sure to post your lines and use gates on roads where

*Water is often overlooked in wildlife management*

## HUNTING LEASES CONT.

You may require that anyone on your property have insurance as well. Be sure to have a contract that outlines uses and restrictions. Example contracts for hunting leases can be found online or at state extension.

**Buildings:** If there are structures on the property, such as an old barn or cabin, their use can be agreed upon as well. Whether overnight stays and camping are allowed should be in the contract.

**Seasons:** Time of year and hunting seasons are considerations for hunting leases.

Some leases are simply year round and others are strictly for deer season or bear season, for example. There may be times when you do not want people on your property, such as family gatherings. Again, make sure this is documented and agreed upon in your lease agreement.

**Neighbors:** It's a good idea to communicate with your neighbors and let them know who will be using your property. It could be that your neighbors will gladly take you up on a hunting lease as well.

**Forest management:** There

will be timber harvesting, road maintenance, and other forestry considerations over time. Timing of management activities and hunting seasons should be agreed upon and spelled out in your contract.

There are other considerations to ensure that your hunting lease is successful for your forestland and those you allow access for hunting. Ask the advice of someone who is leasing the hunting rights to their property in your region. Leasing could be a valuable source of revenue from your forest.

*A hunting lease is basically a business agreement*

## BUILDING AND MAINTAINING TRAILS

One of the ways that forest landowners enjoy their land is just simply to be able to walk through it and appreciate its beauty. Often, people follow a deer trail, or maybe an old road through their property. Over time, this becomes the main trail, or even an atv trail.

A little planning and small upgrades to a trail can ensure that it lasts for a long time and doesn't cause problems such as erosion.

It's best to start with a map of your property and lay out trails that lead to special places or to views and other interesting corners of your property. Be sure to consider elevation in determining trail layout. Steep trails are harder to maintain and diffi-

cult for some people to climb. Consider length of trails as well. Also, determining trail use—walking, horseback, or atv—will have different considerations.

After mapping out locations, clear the trail of obstructing branches and rocks. Begin to work on improving the path itself by adding gravel or wood chips. Often, there are natural materials nearby, such as rock and sandstone to improve walking paths.

You may find it necessary to build small retaining walls in some areas to keep your trail intact. Again, you may have natural rocks or fallen trees that can be used this way.

Always be conscience of where water will flow across your property and trails. You do not want water running down trails and eroding them deeper. Use water turnouts made by piling up soil or even laying a small branch at an angle across your trail.

Plan on crossing creeks where the water is low, or where stepping stones provide an easy trail. You may even opt to build a small bridge. Placing benches or a picnic table along a trail can create a special place on your property.

A great resource for more information can be found at: [www.woodlandinfo.org](http://www.woodlandinfo.org) "Trail Design for Small Properties"

*One of the ways to enjoy a forest is to simply walk through it*

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## BUILDING A BAT HOUSE

White nose syndrome is still dramatically reducing bat numbers in the eastern US. While these creatures aren't considered cute and cuddly like baby rabbits or squirrels, bats eat millions of tons of insects annually. The economic impacts to agriculture alone are in the millions of dollars annually. Just think of all the mosquitoes that bats remove from around your home—what's not to love about these creatures? You can show some love back by creating a bat house to place on your property. Information in this article was found at: [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org) (Bat Conservation International).

### Materials:

1/4 inch sheet exterior plywood  
1"x 2" furring strips  
Water based exterior stain

### Dimensions/Instructions:

Cut plywood into 3 pieces:

Front: 16.5 in x 24 in

Back: 26.5 in x 24 in

Roof: 5 in x 24 in

-Cut grooves on the inside of the back 1/16 in deep and spaced 1/4 to 1/2 inches apart.

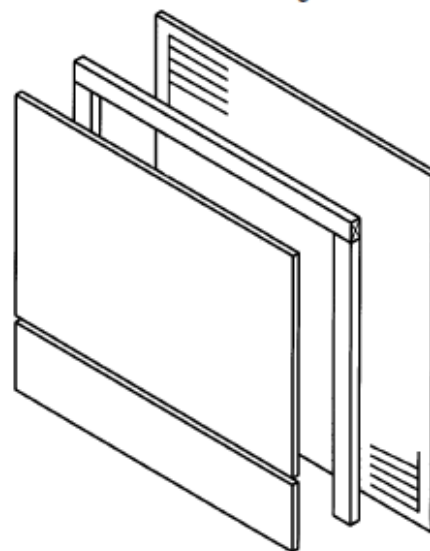
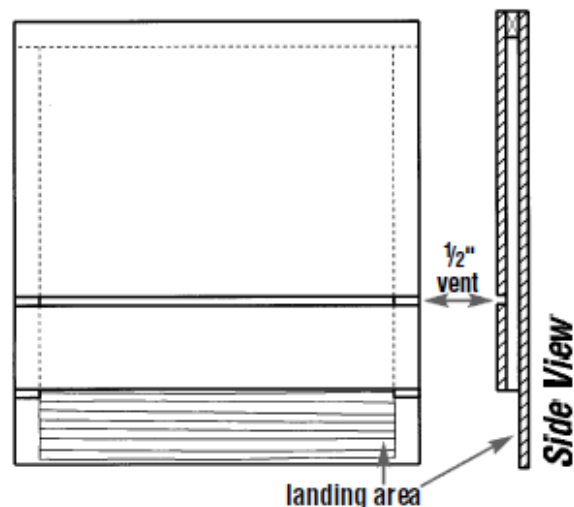
-Stain interior sides with dark stain

-Cut furring strips to fit between front and back pieces, sealing with caulk.

Attach all pieces with screws or nails

-Attach roof piece on top

-Mount box on house, barn, etc facing south or east.



## WE'RE ON THE WEB!

You can visit our site at: [www.columbiaforestproducts.com](http://www.columbiaforestproducts.com). Please come by on occasion and look for our forestry section for landowners. (Click on "Resources" then select "Landowners.")