

Attracting Doves...Legally

South Carolina's Official Planting Guide for Dove Fields

Melissa Ide, Clemson University Student (Former)

Edited by Greg Yarrow, Professor of Wildlife Ecology, Extension Wildlife Specialist and Billy Dukes, Small Game Project Leader, SC Department of Natural Resources

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Planting and cultivating dove fields is a popular and successful technique used by sportsmen, landowners, and land managers to attract and concentrate doves. Careful planning is essential to producing a successful and legal dove field.

This brochure provides the legal guidelines for planting and managing dove fields in South Carolina. A successful dove field displays visible and tangible results in a relatively short period of time, benefits many species of wildlife, and may provide outstanding dove hunting opportunities. There are several important factors to be considered when planning a dove field:

- Choosing the appropriate crop
- Site selection
- Size, shape, and distribution of food plots
- Seeding rates
- Planting depth
- Maturation time
- Maintenance and management
- Cost and availability of plant materials
- Weed and insect control

For more information and recommendations on planting wildlife food plots, contact your local South Carolina Department of Natural Resources office or order a copy of the Clemson Extension Wildlife Planting Guide: Native Wildlife Plants in South Carolina from the Clemson University



Proso millet



Mourning Dove (Zenaidura macroura)

Public Service Publishing website at <http://dprod4.clemson.edu/olos/asp/searchmain.asp>.

Points to Remember

- Top-sowing, or broadcasting without covering the seed, is not considered a normal agricultural practice and is an illegal procedure for planting dove fields.
- Doves prefer to land in clear areas between rows. Keep these areas as weed free as possible by cultivating or using herbicides.
- Plan for at least a portion of the field to mature 2 weeks prior to shooting.
- Plan dove fields with a variety of plantings, providing for different maturation dates, in order to continue attracting doves throughout the season. (Example: browntop millet, proso millet, and sunflowers)
- Scout fields several weeks in advance to determine use by doves.
- Too much shooting pressure will cause doves to move to other areas. Limit shooting to 1-2 days a week.
- Manipulating portions of the field by mowing, chopping, burning, or discing prior to hunting will help expose seeds and attract doves to the field.

This publication was written in cooperation with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.



Recommended Dove Plantings				
Plant Species	Planting Dates (maturing time)	Seeding Rate	Planting Depth	Recommendations
Browntop Millet	May 15 - July 15 (60-70 days)	Rows: 30-42 inches apart @ 8-10 lbs/acre Drilled: 20-35 lbs/acre Broadcast: 25 lbs/acre	1/8 - 1/4 inch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant 3 acres or more 60-80 days before season Several plantings 2-4 weeks apart If drilled, need to mow strips, can burn or rake mowed strips
Dove Proso Millet	May 1 - July 1 (80-90 days)	Rows: 30-42 inches apart @ 8-10 lbs/acre Drilled: 20-35 lbs/acre Broadcast: 25 lbs/acre	1/4 - 1/2 inch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant 3 acres or more Row planting is best for doves If drilled, need to mow strips, can burn or rake mowed strips
White Proso Millet	May 1 - July 1 (80-90 days)	Rows: 30-42 inches apart @ 8-10 lbs/acre Drilled: 20-35 lbs/acre Broadcast: 25 lbs/acre	1/4 - 1/2 inch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant 3 acres or more Row planting is best for doves If drilled, need to mow strips, can burn or rake mowed strips
Sunflowers	April 1 - July 1 (110-120 days)	Seeds 8-10 inches apart in rows 36 inches apart (6-10 lbs/acre)	1 inch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant 5 acres or more May shred or mow part of the field as season approaches Small-seeded oil-type sunflowers are preferred Requires cultivation and herbicide to control weed competition Damage from deer browsing is likely
Corn	March 1 - April 30 (150 days)	12-15 lbs/acre in rows 36-40 inches apart	1-1 1/2 inches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave corn standing around edge of field, harvest mechanically, burn after harvest, or use normal agricultural practices with seeds remaining in field
Sorghum	May 15 - July 1 (80-140 days)	3-5 plants/linear foot in rows 30-36 inches apart (usually 4-7 lbs/acre)	1 inch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known for being drought tolerant
Wheat	Oct. 1 - Nov. 30 (230-260 days)	80-100 lbs/acre (broadcast or drilled)	1 inch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seed must be covered at planting Mow or burn after maturity to attract doves
Sesame (Benne)	May 1 - June 1 (120-150 days)	Rows: 36 inches apart @ 5-6 lbs/acre	1/2 inch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-4 discings in May before planting will help to control weeds