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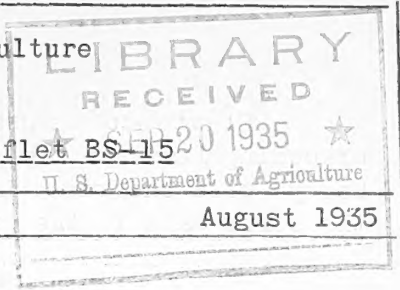
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PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE IN THE COTTON BELT

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Among uses to which land removed from cotton production may be put is planting for wildlife. Farmers as a class enjoy hearing the cheery call of the bobwhite, seeing the cottontail timorously come out to browse at dusk, or in other ways sensing the presence of the wild things that help to make farm life attractive. For those who wish to hunt or to permit hunting on their lands, there are the additional rewards for good wildlife management--game brought to bag or revenue derived from the sale of shooting privileges. In some cases receipts from this source pay taxes, and where due attention is given to the matter, larger revenues are possible.

Planting for wildlife should be planned with reference to two of the greatest needs of furred and feathered creatures; namely, the need for cover and the need for food. Important and indispensable as food is, yet cover must receive first attention, for regardless of the presence of a plenteous food supply, wildlife cannot persist on land without adequate shelter from its enemies and where there is no cover where the young may be safely reared.

Cover for the majority of the small forms of wildlife means low, dense vegetation, some of which should be tangled, or stiff and thorny, so that in time of need, the pursued can dive into it to escape the pursuer. The common broomsedge, for instance, is fairly good concealing cover, but fields of it are much improved for wildlife by the presence of rose or berry brier patches, plum thickets, or honeysuckle tangles.

Planting to improve cover can well be made to serve a double purpose by using food-producing vegetation, and a triple use by carrying it on where erosion control is needed. If only gullies and waste corners of the farm are planted, much can be done to increase cover for wildlife. Cover plants for the Cotton Belt that are useful both as soil binders and food producers include greenbriers or catbriers, blackberries, dewberries, the Cherokee rose, grapevines, Virginia creeper, and Japan honeysuckle.

Fruit-bearing shrubs or small trees that can be used to provide cover on any available land include redcedar, waxmyrtle near the coast, wild roses, thornapples, blackberries, dewberries, wild plums, sumacs, gallberry or inkberry, wild grapes, dogwoods, blueberries, sparkleberry, beautyberry or Mexican mulberry, elderberry, blackhaws and honeysuckles.

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Plants to be used primarily for food producers may be selected from the preceding lists or may be such additional things as mulberry, hackberry, or sugarberry, wild cherries, hollies, sour gum, and persimmon. Good mast yielders are the scrub oaks in the eastern, and shin oaks in the western, part of the region.

Trees and shrubs produce more or less permanent coverts and feeding places, but much use is made also of herbaceous plants, annual or perennial, for feed patches. Land with alternating areas devoted to feed patches and coverts, or in any event with plenty of food available near good coverts, is ideal for wildlife.

Feed patches of a quarter acre to several acres in size are used. The smaller ones are entirely satisfactory, and it should always be borne in mind that proximity to good cover is necessary to full utility of a feed patch. Plants suitable for feed patches are chufa and peanut for wild turkeys, and winter pea, vetches, cowpeas, beggarweeds, Korean and common lespedezas, Lespedeza sericea and other bushclovers, soybeans, sorghums of various types, millets, benne, bullgrass, and Sudan grass for quail. Feed patches are fertilized and cultivated just as in agricultural production of the same plants. Livestock and poultry must be excluded. Expert advice should be obtained as to the best methods of cultivation and as to tested strains of the legumes, sorghums, millets, etc., for each locality. This information can be obtained from the County Agent or from the Agricultural Experiment Station.

A Farmers' Bulletin treating more fully the adaptation of farm practices to wildlife production has been published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The number is 1719-F, and the title, "Improving the Farm Environment for Wildlife." Copies can be obtained at 5 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C.