White-tailed deer eat the leaves, twigs, seeds, and fruit of a wide variety of plant material. They choose vegetation based on palatability, seasonal availability, vegetation abundance, precipitation, and overall health of the habitat. When deer browse, they tend to select the most tender growth first, usually the twig tips and new leaves. When forbs are abundant, the deer’s diet may be primarily forbs for that time period. By observing which plants deer are eating on your property, it is possible to get a better feel for deer population and overall health of your habitat. This brochure is intended to help landowners identify vegetation that white-tailed deer prefer.

Deer Preferences:

**First choice** — Plants eaten whenever found by deer, regardless of season.

**Second choice** — Plants selected when first choice is unavailable or uncommon.

**Third choice** — Plants eaten as a last resort, when more preferred plants are unavailable.

Common Browse Plants Utilized by White-tailed Deer in the Post Oak Savannah and Gulf Coast Prairies

**Western Soapberry**  
*Sapindus saponaria*  
Tree to 15m; long alternate leaves; gray to red bark may break into reddish scales; yellow grape-like berries in fall

**Yaupon**  
*Ilex vomitoria*  
Shrub or tree; small evergreen leaves; gray twigs; shiny red berries in fall and winter

**Blackjack Oak**  
*Quercus marilandica*  
Small tree to 10m; broadly-lobed stiff leaves with bristle at tip; leaf veins conspicuous; acorns ripen in 2 years

**Coralberry**  
*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*  
Small shrub with shreddy reddish bark; leaves opposite; coral red to pink berries in fall

**Eastern Red Cedar**  
*Juniperus virginiana*  
Evergreen tree; reddish-brown bark flakes off in strips; reddish-brown twigs; bluish berries

**Hercules Club/Prickly Ash**  
*Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*  
Rounded shrub or small tree; also called toothache tree; reddish thorns and leaf stems; opposite leaves

**Alabama Supplejack/Rattan Vine**  
*Berchemia scandens*  
Green vine; small leaves with parallel veins evident below; slender branching stems; blue-purple fruit

**American Beautyberry**  
*Callicarpa americana*  
Shrub; opposite deciduous leaves; orange/brown to gray bark; purple berries in clusters around stem in fall

**Bois d’Arc**  
*Maclura pomifera*  
Medium-sized tree; also yellowish-green fleshy fruit on female tree; stems have milky sap

**Honey Mesquite**  
*Prosopis glandulosa*  
Shrub or tree; twigs with 2 inch long thorns; yellow summer blooms; seeds in flat bean pods

**Laurel Greenbriar**  
*Smilax laurifolia*  
Vine; strong prickles; evergreen leaves leathery green to yellow green above

**Peppervine**  
*Ampelopsis arborea*  
Vine; clusters of 5 leaflets; leaves shiny green with raised veins above, lighter green and hairy below; reddish stems at joints; black berry

**Bristle Greenbriar**  
*Smilax hispida*  
Vine; green bark with numerous black needle-like prickles; leaves shiny green above, paler below

**Cedar Elm**  
*Ulmus crassifolia*  
Tree; leaves with serrated edges and prominent veins below; brown slender twigs, bark sometimes with flattened ridges; winged seeds

**Deciduous Holly**  
*Ilex decidua*  
Small tree; twig tips eaten by deer anytime; small tree; deciduous spatulate leaves; light gray to white bark; red berries ripen in fall
**Hawthorn species**
*Crateagus spp.*
small tree; many species; twigs usually with slender thorns; scaly gray outer bark, reddish-brown inner bark; spring white flowers

**Netleaf Hackberry**
*Celtis laevigata*
tree; gray bark with conspicuous warty bumps; leaves pale green asymmetrical at base; late-summer orange to brown/red berry

**Poison Ivy**
*Rhus toxicodendron*
can be small shrub or hairy-stemmed vine; leaf clusters in three; reddish leaf stems; small whitish berries

**Water Oak**
*Quercus nigra*
large tree; also called a “turkey-foot” oak due to leaf shape; leaves vary in shape, often on same branch; usually found in moist to wet soils

**Bumelia**
*Bumelia lanuginosa*
small tree; also called woolybucket bumelia and gum elastic; leaves shiny green above, fuzzy or wooly below; thorns

**Dewberry species**
*Rubus spp.*
prickly vine; 3-5 leaves in cluster; white flowers; black fruit in late spring and summer

**Roughleaf Dogwood**
*Cornus drummondii*
shrub or small tree; olive-green leaf rough above, fuzzy below; reddish stems; fall berries; moist soils

**Sawtooth Greenbriar/Catbriar’**
*Smilax bona-nox*
vine; green bark with green recurved “cathook” prickles; smooth shiny green 3-lobed leaves, can be variable

**St. Andrew’s Cross**
*Ascyrum hypercoides*
multi-branched small shrub with reddish stems; small leaves often growing beneath larger ones; tiny yellow summer blooms

**Farkleberry**
*Vaccinium arboreum*
small tree; oblong evergreen leaves wedge-shaped at base; bell-shaped white flowers; black berries in winter

**Huisache**
*Acacia farnesiana*
shrub or small tree; paired thorns; fragrant yellow spring flowers prized for nectar; seeds in solitary compartments in fat seed pod

**Live Oak**
*Quercus virginiana*
small to large tree; evergreen; usually oblong-shaped leaves; acorns usually in clusters of 3 to 5

**Texas Sophora**
*Sophora affinis*
shrub 2-5m; called Eve’s Necklace; fuzzy leaves; fragrant pink bonnet-shaped blooms, black-bearded bean

**Trumpet Creeper**
*Campsis radicans*
climbing vine or shrub to 10m; opposite leaves with serrated edge; orange tubular flowers

**Virginia Creeper**
*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*
high climbing vine with adhesive tips; 5 leaflets emerging from one point on stem

**Macartney Rose**
*Rosa bracteata*
thorny evergreen shrub; white flowers in the summer; leaves dark green above, paler and hairy below

**Mustang Grape**
*Vitis mustangensis*
woody vine; leaves green to gray-green above with fuzzy whitish hairs below; grapes turn dark purple when ripe

**Post Oak**
*Quercus stellata*
moderately-sized tree; deeply lobed leaves with no points; acorns in fall