

Lawrence Anzaldua Grows 'em Big in Southeast Texas

Want really large whitetails? The stuff of legendary trophy hunts? It's all in the feed says Lawrence Anzaldua, a grower of some impressively large whitetails on his ranch near Victoria, a small town in Southeast Texas. His choice of feed is an Australian bean called Lablab. It's an extremely high-yielding, drought tolerant summer plant with just one fault. It's vulnerable to early grazing pressure.

Deer love the stuff and will chow down on it shortly after it emerges, unfortunately well before it matures. The lablab plant is one of the best warm-season sources of protein, antler-growing phosphorus and other important nutrients.

Lablab is essentially a super cowpea, only more nutritious and productive, capable of producing over 10,000 pounds per acre. Another advantage is its ability to withstand recent Texas weather patterns. The leafy plant is drought, disease and insect resistant. Deer will literally walk over other summer forages, including cowpeas and soybeans, to feed on Lablab.

Heavy grazing during the first three to four weeks can be disastrous. Lablab experts explain growing a successful crop is a matter of timing. "Its vulnerability can be overcome either by planting enough acreage to spread out early grazing pressure or by temporarily fencing off the young plants," they say. "Once the plants grow into the multi-leafed stage, they can withstand the heaviest grazing pressure and continue to flourish."

"My ranch is off the beaten path about 18 miles from Victoria," said Anzaldua. "We're 2 ½ hours southwest of Houston so it's pretty far out and we've got a lot of deer and other wildlife looking for a free meal. I needed a way to keep some pretty aggressive animals away until the Lablab had matured, then I needed to give the deer quick access."

Anzaldua has found nothing capable of delivering more and better nutrition during the spring and through the early fall antler-growing/fawning period. He claims 20 to 40 inches of antler growth and a substantial weight gain for mature bucks.

"I see bucks that are maybe 100 pounds heavier than the same age deer on other spreads," he said.



Bucks of that size attract hunters and makes protecting early Lablab growth critical. "I erected my first Gallagher power fence about 8 years ago" he said.

I put it up in early April and it takes about a day and a half to fence in the 10 acres".

"I use three 8 foot rods to ground the energizer which powers three parallel fences set about three feet apart. The outer fence has two strands of Turbo Tape set at a height of two and three feet. The middle fence is a single strand of Turbo Tape one foot off the ground. The inside fence is a single strand of Turbo Tape at 4 feet. It keeps the most aggressive deer away until the lablab gets established," he said.

"I can walk the perimeter and see lots of animal tracks. Deer. feral pigs...all of them try but none of them get in. The edge of the field is only about 75 yards from the ranch house, so I can keep an eye on what's happening. And it takes me about 5 hours to remove the fence when it's time to let the deer feed," said Anzaldua.

He keeps the fence in place for about four to six weeks. The fence is powered by a 12 volt battery and solar panel so he essentially has no energy costs, and has a continuous power supply, important in the storm-ravaged Texas coastal region. This year, it was down well before the hurricane that wiped out almost all the fencing in the southeastern coastal counties, saving Anzaldua a lot of time and money.

Needless to say, Lawrence highly endorses the fence and feels planting the Lablab would be a lost cause without it. He highly recommends it to any ranch owner serious about growing huge whitetails. "My Gallagher fence has never failed me and I am totally dependent on it".