



Brandon Fitzpatrick

MODERN hunter

WHERE LOCALLY GROWN FOOD MEANS BACKYARD TARGET PRACTICE. BY WHITNEY PIPKIN

COME DEER-HUNTING SEASON, it's not unusual to find Brandon Fitzpatrick and his buddies perched in trees, in full camo, waiting on does with bows in hand. What is unusual is that they're usually in a friend's backyard—not in some rural outpost of Virginia, but in the classically suburban enclave of Woodbridge. Such is the life of the urban bow hunter.

"It would literally be like the night before and I'd get a text, 'Hey you guys want to go hunting?'" said Fitzpatrick, 31, who snagged a crossbow—and his first deer—this past year. "We'd go

early before work, hunt a couple hours, and go home."

Northern Virginia allows a longer season for "urban archery," which, unlike rifle hunting, is permitted in many suburban counties. If Fitzpatrick didn't live in a townhouse, he could bow-hunt deer from his backyard. But the law prohibits letting arrows loose within 100 yards of a house, unless it's target practice.

Still, his hunting group doesn't have a problem finding good perches nearby, considering the state's rampant deer population. One neighbor requested they hunt on his land to quell the influx of garden-eating bambis.

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It was on a friend's land last summer that Fitzpatrick hit the big one, his first bow-hunted deer, much to the chagrin of contemporaries who'd been hunting longer. After braving the elbow-deep art of cleaning a deer, Fitzpatrick had the meat butchered.

"That was cool, man. I've still got venison in the freezer," said Fitzpatrick, who has turned the meat into venison chili, jerky and a bacon-wrapped back strap, which he said was superb.

To Fitzpatrick, bow hunting isn't just about the meat; it's about getting to enjoy the sport of hunting more often—and in a totally different way—than he would with a rifle. He can get downright poetic about it, "Bow hunting, as I see it, is to rifle hunting as fly fishing is to typical bass fishing. ... You're a little more one with creation."