

HOW TO GROW NATIVE SEEDS

Think...

Issues to consider are sun, drainage, soils, planting time, weather, existing plants and dormant weed seeds, residual chemical, your tools and equipment, expectations and your budget. Take responsibility and care for the land. Use common sense. *The natives are very friendly.*

Read the Land

Touch the earth and quietly listen. 150 years ago only native plants grew here. Though many changes have occurred, they would love to come back home. We encourage you to become native to your place.

When choosing your site, read your land and how it lays. A compatible matching of seeds and planting sites is important.

Most *annual* spring blooming wildflowers are cool season plants. They sprout and grow during the fall-winter. They bloom, go to seed and then die back in late spring-summer. Plant these types of wildflower seeds in early fall. August through November are the best dates, the earlier the better.

The *perennial* wildflowers can be planted in spring or fall. Many perennials develop strong, deep tuberous roots the first year before producing blooms.

Exotic cool season grasses and clovers are not compatible with wildflowers.

Warm season *native grass* seeds germinate when soil temps are above 65° F. Regarding the best time to plant native grasses, it is true that late spring gives the best chances of success in normal rainfall years. However, successful plantings may be made up until 90 days before frost. The trade off is the daily passing of this year's growing season which translates into lighter top growth.

Sprouting is triggered by soil temperature, moisture, and daylight hours. And of course there are always exceptions. If you need assistance, visit our website or please call us. Our staff is ready to help you.

Bed Preparation

If you have existing warm season grass, mow short, then remove thatch. Small sites can be hand raked or tilled no more than 1" deep to expose bare soil. Almost all soils contain dormant weed seeds, which will be awakened by excessive tilling.

A "weedy" site may signal that special attention be required. Reduce invasive perennial weeds such as bermuda, KR bluestem, buffel, vasey and johnsongrass prior to planting native grass. Till and remove roots if possible. For small plots, consider using black plastic to solarize and kill weeds during hot summer months. For large areas, consider plowing with a tractor and various implements several times before seeding to expose, freeze or dry unwanted roots. If you choose chemical weed killers, get advice from your county extension agent.

The least amount of soil disturbance will have the most favorable results, unless other objectives such as breaking hard clay sub-soils or incorporating organic matter and minerals are desired.

When planting a native grass lawn, many people prefer to take special care. By starting with a weed-free, smoothly raked seedbed, the recommended lawn seeding rates are then applied. The lawn is kept weeded and watered until healthy native grass plants are established.

The Act of Seeding

Achieve good seed to soil contact. Spread seed by hand, like "feeding the chickens". A broadcast spreader or a seed drill is good for larger areas. Heavier seeding rates will work to your benefit. In comparing lost time maintaining weed control in a thin planting, *the value of native seeds is very economical.*



heavy metal plow, planter, packer or no-till drill eqpt



or walk-behind tiller, whirlybird and roller





with or without special equipment, the basics of seeding remain... dispersal, light covering, then firmly press seed into the soil

some seed on surface is ok

Mix fluffy or small seeds with a "carrier" for even distribution. Carriers such as coarse sand, perlite, rice hulls or other extenders aid in keeping seeds in suspension. This seed-carrier mix creates a "free flowing" characteristic as needed to broadcast the seed. Take half the seed mixture and spread it evenly over the whole area. Then cross back in opposite directions and spread the rest.

Most seeds should never be buried more than twice their diameter. Do not bury small seeds at all! One of the most common reasons that seeds fail to come up is that they have been planted too deeply. Some seeds will be visible on the ground.

Try using the sweeping motion of a treebranch or a leaf rake followed by a rollerpacker or the boots of a big foot. A diligent effort should be made to press the seeds into the soil. A firm seed-to-soil contact is very important.

Water Talk

Nature allows seeds to lie dormant in the soil until rain falls. If you choose to irrigate, keep up with your watering until plants are established. For germination, water lightly and frequently to **prevent top of soil from drying out**. Rain gauges placed throughout the seeded areas can help you monitor daily waterings. When wildflower seedlings are about 1 inch tall or grass seedlings have 3 to 5 blades per sprout, reduce the frequency of waterings to 2 or 3 times weekly. Increase water per application to achieve greater soaking depths for development of healthy root systems. Alternate soil moisture from good deep soakings to moderately dry in between waterings. Roots need a balance of oxygen. Reduce frequency of waterings over time as plants become established. Supplemental water may be discontinued as seasonal rains return.

Encourage and Enjoy

We walk softly helping the young budding plants by pulling out exotic grasses and broadleaf weeds. We effectively reduce these weeds year by year by limiting the seeds they make. Do not mow dying wildflowers too early! Seed production for next year should be encouraged.

Most of the seeds must be allowed to mature, like... 'on the vine' before mowing.

Nature's plan goes on with us and without us. Be patient. Those who plant seeds, play an intimate role in the experience of life. Connecting the miracle of a seed to the forces of earth and sky...brings immeasurable joy to one's heart.

Read the land

- choose the spot
- match seeds to the site
- consider the competition
- seasonal timing

Prepare the site

- walk lightly on the earth
- mow close if needed
- expose soil and rake up thatch or till no more than 1" deep
- don't stir up dormant weed seeds
- exotic cool season grasses and clovers are not compatible

The act of seeding

- sow your seeds
- seeds touch the earth
- roll or pack

Water talk

- let it rain
- if not, learn to water properly

Encourage and enjoy

- encourage the natives
- discourage the weeds
- enjoy the experience!

Quick Seed Tips