

Best-Practices for Establishing Native Wildflower Seed



Site Preparation

- Treat your native pollinator plot like you would a crop; success depends on adequate weed control and management before you plant and during the establishment period.
- Avoid planting natives if more than 10% of the area is infested with perennial weeds.
- Controlling non-native weeds and invasive species may require multiple herbicide (glyphosate) applications, tillage and/or a season of cover crop.
- Once free from weeds, ensure the ground is tilled, and pressed firm to allow for seed-soil contact. Seed must contact open soil to establish.
- The seedbed should be firm enough so that the impression left by a footprint is 1 to 1¼ inch deep.
- Some sites may require one full season of weed control and site preparation prior to seeding.

Timing

- Most wildflowers require a period (30-90 days) of cold and moist winter conditions to germinate in the spring.
- Sowing the seed mix in the late fall (late Nov.-early Dec.) is strongly recommended for best results.
- Alternatively, you may broadcast sow the seed mix in the winter, during a period of freeze-thaw cycles.
- If the options above are not possible, sow the seed in the very early spring, before the end of May, while precipitation occurs regularly.

Installation

- Drill Seeding is the best option for sowing wildflower seed on agricultural sites. This can be done using traditional drilling techniques conducive for small forage seed. Seed should be planted no more than ¼ inch on fine textured soils; and ¼ to ½ inch on sandy soils.
- Broadcast Seeding (followed by harrowing and packing where possible) is a viable option for agricultural sites that are tilled.
- Several methods can work depending on the time of year and the site conditions, however we recommend hydro-seeding only on inaccessible slopes.

Maintenance

- Wildflower meadows take 3 years to establish and require effective weed control during this time.
- During establishment, meadows will look weedy and may not have many blooms as the wildflowers grow to maturity. This is normal and expected.
- Mow new seedlings to 6" 2-4 times per year in the first 3 years. Regular maintenance will help reduce annual weed pressure.
- Mow older meadows to 6" or use a controlled burn once every 5-8 years to maintain native wildflower diversity.