

MICHIGAN WILDFLOWER FARM'S TEN STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL WILDFLOWER PLANTING

Step 1. ANALYZE your site. Determine soil type (sand, silt, clay, muck), current vegetation, drainage, moisture, slope, amount of sunlight and what is growing adjacent/nearby the seeding area. Generally, tight, wet clay soil, dune sand or infertile subsoils are not suitable for wildflower seedings. It is recommended that seeding take place in spring (mid-May to mid-June), dormant seeding (mid-October thru November) or snow seeding. Although seeding maybe done at any time, you run the risk of losing newly germinated seedlings if either a hot, dry period or killing freeze occur before the seedlings are well established.

Step 2. SELECT proper species for your site. Choose plant species that are native to Michigan and grown as close to your area as possible for better adaptability. An additional cover crop may be recommended, especially for sloped or bare soil sites. A cover crop also helps to suppress weed growth during the slow germination period of perennials the first year. You may also add a carrier such as damp sand to add more bulk to your seed. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT IT TAKES 3-5 YEARS FOR NATIVE PERENNIALS TO BECOME WELL ESTABLISHED.

Step 3. HOW MUCH SEED DO I NEED?

<u>Area to be covered</u>	<u>Perennial seed</u>	<u>Additional Cover Crop (if needed)</u>
1 acre	10 lb. Dryland 6 lb. Wetland	15 lb. annual rye
1000 sq. ft.	5 oz. Dryland 3 oz. Wetland	8 oz. annual rye

Step 4. ELIMINATE quack grass, lawn sod, persistent perennial weeds, etc. prior to seeding, with organic or herbicide methods. Organic methods include covering the area with black plastic for the spring/summer months or tilling for one full growing season. Herbicide with a Glyphosate product according to label directions. Make sure that the herbicide does not include ingredients making it persistent in the soil. 1-3 herbicide applications may be needed. Bare soil on new construction sites typically contain an abundance of weed seeds. Ideally allow for these seeds to germinate and treat as noted. DO NOT NEGLECT THIS STEP OR THE PLANTING WILL HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS.

Step 5. PREPARE SEEDBED by raking, thatching, or burning, so that about 50% of the soil surface is showing. Your goal is to achieve good seed to soil contact. Removing all dead vegetation is not necessary. Scarify soil surface with rake, thatcher, or carefully controlled tiller to a depth of one inch or less. Do not turn up any more new soil, as this WILL bring new weed seeds to the surface. A roller can be used to firm the seed bed prior to seeding if necessary.

Step 6. SOW THE SEED on smaller sites with a hand-cranked whirlwind seeder or by hand using very small amounts. Divide the seed in half for the first sowing and then sow the 2nd half perpendicular to the first. Criss-cross the seedbed several times to assure good coverage. Larger projects may be sown with mechanical seeders. Seed may be separated by size depending upon seeding method.

Step 7. INCORPORATE SEEDS by raking very lightly or going over the area with a thatcher. Roll with lawn roller or tamp small areas with rake or foot so seed will make good contact with soil. Some fine seeds such as Monarda prefer no covering. A good rule is to cover no seed deeper than its own diameter. Bare, erosive soil may be lightly mulched with weed seed-free straw so that 50% of the soil still shows. Covering the seed with an erosion control blanket is suggested for sloped areas.

Step 8. WATERING is not necessary but will speed germination and establishment. However, once watering is begun soil must be kept moist continuously until the seedlings are well established. The majority of our seeding projects do not include irrigation.

Step 9. FIRST YEAR MANAGEMENT is critical for the success of your planting. Weeds will be a concern the first year. We recommend following a mowing regime for at least one-year post planting. Cut the planting to 4-6 inches whenever growth reaches 10-12 inches throughout the first growing season. A string trimmer works well on rough terrain or if mower cannot be set high enough. This technique is effective in preventing weeds from reseeding.

Step 10. LONG TERM MANAGEMENT of a planting would include pulling weeds, cutting or spot spraying with herbicide. Do use extreme caution if spot herbiciding so as not to affect desirable plants. The entire planting can be mowed in late fall or early spring. If the site allows, burning every three years in March or early April will help maintain a meadow planting. Do not burn the first two years, as tender seedlings may be damaged. Be sure to obtain a burning permit or contact a professional.

When well-established (3-5 years), wildflowers provides a relatively low-maintenance area with high aesthetic and environmental quality. Remember that LOW MAINTENANCE DOES NOT MEAN NO MAINTENANCE. Plan to manage your planting for the long term by watching for and dealing with invasive species. Please see our *What to Expect from a Wildflower Seeding* handout under Helpful Hints at www.michiganwildflowerfarm.com.