



# BACKYARD PRAIRIE POLLINATOR PROGRAM

The Backyard Prairie Pollinator Program provides guidance for establishing native prairie plots to support pollinators. Establishing a successful prairie requires patience and proper preparation.

## Site Selection

- Ideal plots are in full sun with few or no trees.
- Best placement is on the east, west, or south sides of buildings.

## Site Preparation

Proper seedbed preparation is the most critical part of prairie establishment. Two main site types are addressed:

### Bare Soil Sites

- Loosen soil via rototilling or shallow disking.
- Broadcast seed by hand in spring (April 1–May 31).
- Use a cultipacker or tools like mower tires or weighted fencing to press seed into soil.
- Spray any green vegetation that appears 7–10 days post-seeding with glyphosate.

### Vegetated Sites (e.g., turf, pasture, hayfields)

#### Herbicide Treatment Method:

- Mow low, allow regrowth, then spray with glyphosate + 2,4-D.
- Re-spray 14 days later, then expose soil via tilling or raking.
- Seed after 14 days, then cultipack.

#### Non-Herbicide Method:

- Cover area with dark plastic or plywood for 2 months before planting.
- Remove, rototill, seed by hand, and cultipack.

To find more online, scan or visit:  
[lpsnrd.org/pollinatorprogram](http://lpsnrd.org/pollinatorprogram)



## Compacted Soil Testing

Use the “screwdriver method”: if you can’t press a flathead screwdriver more than 2 inches into the soil, it’s too compacted and needs disking or tilling.

## Broadcast Seeding

Scatter seed by hand, ideally dividing both the seed and plot into equal sections for even coverage.

## Establishment & Managing Expectations

- The first 1–2 years will involve noticeable annual weeds and minimal above-ground growth.
- Most growth happens underground early on as native plants establish strong root systems.
- By year three, native plants should dominate and outcompete weeds.
- Annual maintenance during the first two years is essential to minimize weeds long-term.



Photo Credit: Chris Helzer, The Nature Conservancy

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