

## **BPPP Planting Information**

**Seed bed preparation is the more critical step for the successful establishment of your new native prairie. Please be sure to follow the instructions provided below closely. This process is the most labor-intensive step, but it will ensure you have a beautiful prairie for you to enjoy for many years to come.**

### Site Preparation for “Bare Soil” Sites\*

- Rototill or shallow disk (2-4 inches) prior to seeding if soil is compacted or clods are larger than half an inch
- Broadcast\* seed by hand in spring (April 1 – May 31)
- Cultipack site after seeding, this will help seed to soil contact
  - Any tool to help press seed into soil (cultipack) will work, e.g., mower tires, tamper, walking on, or weighted piece of chain link fence dragged across area.
- Spray any green vegetation that appears on site within 14 days of planting. Spraying unwanted grasses during this time with glyphosate will not harm newly planted seed.

### Site Preparation for “Vegetated” Sites

Examples – turf grass lawns, pastures, and hayfields

#### Herbicide Treatment Method

- As soon as green up and new growth occurs in spring, mow area down as low as your mower will allow.
- Allow vegetation to regrow 2-4 inches (approximately 2 weeks), then spray regrowth with an herbicide mixture of glyphosate and 2,4-D.
- Re-spray any remaining green vegetation approximately 7 days after the first herbicide treatment.
- Rototill or rake area by hand to expose soil for proper seed bed.
- Seed may then be planted 14 days after final herbicide treatment.
- Broadcast\* seed by hand and cultipack
- Seed in spring (April 1 – May 31)

\* If hard sod remains (see Screwdriver Method), consider disking or tilling after the initial herbicide treatment. If this is followed, use the “bare soil” guidelines for further site preparation.

#### Non-herbicide Treatment Method

- Place a dark plastic tarp or pieces of plywood over the area you wish to plant approximately 2 months prior to planting (recommend this by March 15 at the latest)

- After 2 months, remove cover and immediately rototill the area
- Broadcast\* seed by hand and cultipack

**Herbicide Use - PLEASE BE SURE TO ALWAYS FOLLOW THE HERBICIDE LABEL DIRECTIONS ATTACHED TO THE CONTAINER!**

\*The “Screwdriver Method” to Test for Compacted Soil

- Compacted soil can greatly reduce the establishment of new prairie seeds. To check for compacted soil, press a flathead screwdriver into the soil in multiple locations in your prairie plot. If you cannot get the screwdriver to push more than two inches into the soil, your soil is likely too compacted and will require disking or rototilling. If this is the case, please refer to the “Bare Soil” site preparation information.

\*Broadcast Seeding

- The process of scattering seed across an area by hand. It is recommended to divide the seed you receive and your plot evenly. This will ensure that the appropriate amount of seed is placed across the entire plot. This isn't mandatory but will help create the appropriate coverage.
- Example: I have a 1000 square foot plot that I break up into 4-250 sq ft plots. I then weigh the seed I have and divide the weight of the seed evenly into four piles and seed each sub-plot

Longevity

- If properly maintained, this prairie plot should last 10+ years before any inter-seeding/renovation would be required. Proper establishment and annual maintenance should help prolong the life of your prairie.

Woody vegetation control

- Woody vegetation control can be difficult if not addressed quickly.
- In the first two years, be sure to look closely for any sprouting trees and remove immediately while being sure to disturb as little soil as possible.
- If woody vegetation becomes established (trees greater than ½ inch diameter), cutting and treating stumps with herbicide may be required.
- Some native woody vegetation such as wild plum or chokecherry may be desirable, however these shrubs should be contained to specific locations in or around your prairie.

First Year Maintenance

- To control unwanted annual weeds, mowing may be used

- Mow plot to a height of 4 to 6 inches. This will reduce weed competition and will not harm prairie plants.
- Do not allow weeds to go to seed
- Recommend not pulling weeds out by hand as this may disturb prairie plants that are just sprouting or germinating in the soil around the weeds. If necessary, please use caution to disturb as little soil as possible.
- If weeds are persistent in year-2 and year-3, mowing treatments like year-1 may be necessary. However, please use caution in year-3 as established prairie plants should be able to outcompete most annual weeds and may be harmed by mowing.

#### Annual Maintenance after Establishment

- After prairie has become established (~3 years) prescribed burning\* or mowing may be used.
  - For mowing, mow area once a year in early spring prior to green up
  - Remove thatch/clippings from mowing to help expose soil and crowns of plants
- \*Check with your local fire department or prescribed burning association to get information and required permits.

#### Site selection

- Full sun with few or no trees (a few native shrubs are ok)
- Generally best on east, west, or south side of buildings

#### Establishment – Managing Expectations

The first couple years of your prairie's life you may notice a lot of annual weeds. This may look unsightly and you may fear your prairie plots are not growing, however this is very common. The first few years some if not most of the species in your mix will grow very little above ground. Maybe only a couple inches, while most of the growing is happening below ground. It takes time for these species to establish a solid root system before they begin investing in above ground growth. By year three, you should notice many of the species in your mix and far fewer annual weeds. At this stage, your natives will begin to outcompete these annual weeds for years to come. However, it is very important to conduct annual maintenance the first two years as described in this document. By doing so, you should expect a mostly weed free prairie plot.