

Please don't hesitate to call or email  
with any questions.



PRAIRIE MOON  
NURSERY

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# PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS

For Hand Sowing Your Native Seed Mix

## SHORT-TERM STORAGE OF SEED

(up to 4-6 months) Store your seed in a cool (below 70°F), dry place. Protect from rodents. If using a refrigerator place the seeds in an airtight container to keep moisture out.

## EROSION-PRONE SITES

Nurse/cover crops are sometimes established prior to a native seeding, or combined with a native seed mix. This provides quick growth because native perennials develop very slowly from seed. However, this is usually only beneficial on very steep and/or long slopes, or sites that are otherwise prone to erosion. Cover crops when not needed simply add more competition to native plants.

The amount of cover crop seed in your Prairie Moon mix is very modest. If your projects will depend on a cover crop to reduce erosion you should purchase additional cover crop seed.

## INCLUDED IN YOUR SEED MIX

A typical Prairie Moon seed mix comes with five separate packages. The planting instructions in this pamphlet explain what to do with these:

- Large seed: grasses
- Large seed: legumes  
(species of the pea family)
- Large seed: cover crop
- Large seed: forbs (wildflowers)
- Small seed: forbs (wildflowers)

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*Some mixes lack one or more of these packages. Some include an additional package of seed that must be refrigerated until planting time. This will be indicated with a pink sticker.*

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## SITE PREPARATION

Before planting, all existing vegetation should be eliminated and the weed seed bank reduced. Any of the following methods may be used to prepare a planting site:

Completing proper site preparation may greatly decrease weed competition. This important process will give your slow-establishing native plants a needed advantage. It is much easier to put the time and effort into proper site preparation than to deal with overwhelming weed competition later.

## REPEATED HERBICIDE TREATMENTS

*Many practitioners report success (read label carefully).*

## MOWING AND/OR BURNING

*Depending on the existing vegetation, this can sometimes be sufficient.*

## FREQUENT, SHALLOW SOIL CULTIVATION

*This may take several seasons to be effective.*

## SMOTHERING

*This may require two full growing seasons.*

## SOLARIZATION

*Best achieved over one full growing season.*

## SOD REMOVAL

*The results depend on the seed bank. There may be unwanted weed seed beneath the sod.*

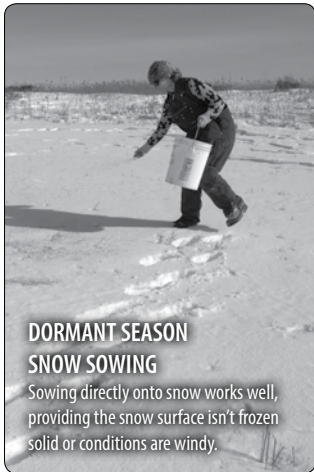


## PLANTING YOUR SEED MIX

A single person should plan for approximately one hour to broadcast seed over one eighth acre. There are two times of year during which you may plant your seed mix:

- **DORMANT SEASON** (October - March)
- **SPRING** (April - June)

We suggest a dormant season planting. You should not plant from early summer through mid-fall.



## DORMANT SEASON PLANTING

(7 steps) *Late October - March*

We recommend seeding during this time of year because it offers the following advantages over spring seeding:

- *Cold-moist stratification occurs before the first growing season; resulting in a more successful establishment of forbs (wildflowers) and sedges, which are often overwhelmed by the grasses*
- *Good seed-soil contact without disturbing the soil*
- *Higher soil moisture at the time of germination and less need to water the site*
- *Small and large seed can be sown together*

**STEP 1:** Divide the planting area into two or more equal sections that will be planted in sequence.

This will help achieve an even distribution of your seed mix. The greater the number of sections, the more even your distribution will be.



**STEP 2:** If your mix includes a packet of "Legume seed mix & inoculum," follow the instructions on the label.

**STEP 3:** Combine all of the packages of seed and mix thoroughly.



**STEP 4:** Divide the combined seed into equal parts in the same number as the sections you used to divide your planting area (e.g., four equal sections of land = four equal containers of seed).



**STEP 5:** Choose a filler material to be mixed with the seed. Sawdust, compost, peat moss, sand or par-boiled rice hulls (available through [prairiemoon.com](http://prairiemoon.com), or call to order) work well. Use four to eight gallons of filler per 1,000 square feet. For larger plantings it may be practical to use less. Slightly moisten the material in a gradual manner, being careful not to over-wet it.

**STEP 6:** Thoroughly mix each part of the divided seed mix with filler material.



**STEP 7:** Hand broadcast the seed mix. Use one part of the seed mix per section of the planting area.

## SPRING PLANTING

(10 steps) *April - June*

Seeding at this time of year is optimal for establishing warm-season grass mixes without wildflowers or sedges. Spring seeding requires sowing large and small seed separately, which helps ensure good seed-to-soil contact. Weed growth in the first season will be greater due to soil cultivation (see step 8).

**STEP 1:** Divide the planting area into two or more equal sections that will be planted in sequence. This will help achieve an even distribution of your seed mix. The greater the number of sections, the more even your distribution will be.

**STEP 2:** If your mix includes a packet of “Legume seed mix & inoculum,” follow the instructions on the label.

**STEP 3:** Combine all of the packages labeled “Large seed,” keeping the small seed separate.

**STEP 4:** Divide both the small and the large seed mixes into equal parts in the same number as the sections you used to divide your planting area (e.g., *four equal sections of land = four equal containers of seed for each mix*).



**STEP 5:** Choose a filler material to be mixed with the seed. Sawdust, compost, peat moss, sand or par-boiled rice hulls (available through [prairiemoon.com](http://prairiemoon.com), or call to order) work well. Use four to eight gallons of filler per 1,000 square feet. For larger plantings it may be practical to use less. Slightly moisten the material in a gradual manner, being careful to not over-wet it.

**STEP 6:** Thoroughly mix each part of the large seed mix with slightly moistened filler material.

**STEP 7:** Thoroughly mix each part of the small seed mix with slightly moistened filler material. Mix separate from the large seed.

**STEP 8:** Hand broadcast the large seed only. Use one part of the seed mix per section of the planting area. Rake or drag to incorporate the seed very shallowly into the soil – only 1/16 to 1/8 inch deep.



**STEP 9:** In the same manner, hand broadcast the small seed and leave it on the surface. Do not rake or otherwise disturb the soil after this step.

**STEP 10:** Gently pack down the soil. You can use your feet, a lawn roller, or a variety of equipment. This improves soil moisture retention and will result in more successful establishment of plants.

## MOWING

Maintenance mowing through the first growing season will prevent quick-growing weeds from excessively shading the new native seedlings. Hand-held string trimmers are ideal tools for small areas or sites that are too steep to mow.

Mow each time weed growth reaches 8-10 inches. Cut everything to a height of 4-5 inches. Don't worry about trimming the tops of native seedlings or crushing them underfoot. Mow frequently to keep cutting debris reduced so that it doesn't smother desirable seedlings.

Stop mowing at the end of the first season. Remove any weed seed heads but don't be concerned with additional vegetative growth. It can help protect native plants through winter by providing plant litter and catching snow. This helps to insulate the soil, reducing the risk of plant loss from frost heaving.

If weeds are thick in the beginning of the second season, mow or spot-mow once or twice. Raise the cutting height to 6-12 inches.

## MANAGEMENT

Most native plantings, after two or three growing seasons, need to be burned annually for the next five or more years to become well established. After five years divide the area in thirds and burn a different section each year, thereby protecting over-wintering butterflies and other insects. If a planting is not periodically burned, a thatch layer can build up over the years, causing some native species to grow poorly or even to die out completely. Burning is the single most important management practice for native plantings.

*Always use caution and common-sense when burning. Follow local fire regulations, obtain permits and have plenty of tools and help on hand. For more detailed information, we recommend the booklet *How to Manage Small Prairie Fires* by Wayne R. Pauly. Additional burning information is available from the *Prairie Enthusiasts*, [www.theprairieenthusiasts.org](http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org).*

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*An alternative to burning: If burning is not permitted at your site or if you prefer not to use this method, you can mow or manually remove thatch in early spring.*