



# HEARTLAND SEED OF MISSOURI, LLC'S THREE P'S OF NATIVE PLANTINGS: PREP, PLANTING, & PATIENCE

**These are recommendations only. If you are participating in a cost share program, the instructions from your agency should be followed before considering any of the following.**

1. **SITE PREP:** A successful planting begins with a firm seedbed free of competing vegetation. An ideal area would be one with at least 50% bare ground. This will help ensure good seed-to-soil contact and allow the native seedlings adequate water, sunlight and nutrients during establishment. A glyphosate-based herbicide is recommended when trying to eliminate or suppress weeds and undesirable cool-season grass such as fescue. More than one application may be needed and up to three sprays is recommended depending upon site conditions. Prescribed burning is also a great way of preparing your ground. Natives can then be seeded directly onto the remaining ash within recommended seeding dates. We do not recommend heavy disking as this could disturb additional competition weed seed and bring it to the surface. Almost all successful plantings begin with a good plan. Preparing the ground can be very site specific and therefore it is always a good idea to check with your local agency for their recommendations.
2. **PLANTING:** Dormant seeding (Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> – Mar. 15<sup>th</sup>) is the recommended planting window for wildflowers. Native grasses can be planted at other times (spring seeded), but when included in a seed mix for cost share, they're often planted with the wildflowers during the dormant season. Broadcasting and drilling native seed are the two options most often used. For smaller areas where equipment is difficult to use, hand broadcasting may be necessary.
  - A. **DRILLING:** A native seed drill is the most efficient piece of equipment to use when no-till drilling. Drills are often available for rent at your local USDA office. For those less adventurous, a list of installers is available upon request. When renting a native seed drill, ALWAYS check to see if wildflowers need to be kept/bagged separate from native grasses as many drills have different seed boxes to accommodate different size/type seed. Seed should not be planted more than ¼ inch deep. (depending on seed size) When drilling is complete, it's normal to see approximately 1/3 of your seed sitting on top of the soil. Most wildflower species require 30-90 days of cold, wet stratification before germinating. The natural freezing and thawing during the dormant season will work the seed into the soil. The most important thing to remember when drilling is if seed is planted too deep it may not germinate. Make sure your drill is calibrated correctly and it's always a good idea to do a test run to ensure you'll run out of ground to seed instead of running out of seed to plant.

- B. BROADCASTING:** When choosing the broadcasting method, there may be a few options to consider. When broadcasting, some agencies require 1.5 times the amount of seed to qualify for cost share. Because wildflower seeds vary in size and can be very small, it's common to use a carrier when broadcasting your seed to ensure even distribution. Some examples of carriers are: cat litter, pelletized lime, cotton seed hulls, sawdust, rice hulls or sand. A 50:50 ratio is used unless you are hand seeding, at which point you may want to go heavier with the carrier. If you can time it right, broadcast right before a snowfall. This is the easiest way for nature to work the seed into the soil. If snowfall is not in the weather forecast, using a cultipacker to roll the seeded area is acceptable, although not always necessary.
3. **PATIENCE:** Establishing natives is a slow process. Although you may end up seeing some vegetation/color in the first year, most species are developing their root systems. (Which in case you didn't know, some of their roots go as far as 15 feet deep!) Be patient. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year you'll see even more color and then get ready to be wowed in year 3. If properly maintained, plantings will flourish for a decade or even longer.

Let us know if we can answer any questions or provide any guidance as you establish your planting. Your efforts will not go unnoticed as you begin to create habitat for birds, butterflies, bees, wildlife and many other insects and critters. And on behalf of Heartland Seed of Missouri, LLC, thank you for your part in the conservation mission.