

MAINTENANCE: WHAT'S NEXT?



- Before you completed your planting, you were equipped with the “Three P’s of Native Plantings”. The first being Site **Preparation**, the second, **Planting**, and the third, **Patience**. Although prairies are low maintenance, they are by no means NO maintenance. It is critical to follow a few guidelines especially in the first establishment year.
- To the right, we’ll walk you through the first few years of caring for your prairie and maintenance recommendations for a successful establishment.
- Because maintenance of prairies is biological and site specific, **ALWAYS contact your local agency prior to performing any suggested maintenance.** Just because you are given specific dates for performing certain maintenance treatments doesn’t mean Mother Nature follows along with that schedule.

YEAR ONE:

During the first year, natives spend most of their energy developing their root systems. Although you might see some color from early successional, seedlings most likely will not reach a height of 6 inches. Because there’s not a substantial growth happening on top of the ground, competition weeds are working hard to take over. Take a good look at your planting every 2-4 weeks. Mow as often as necessary when competition weeds reach a height of 12 inches. Set your mower at a height of 6-8 inches. That way, you’re not disturbing the new seedlings, but you will be disturbing those competition weeds before they have a chance to seed. Waiting to mow when competition weed heights reach more than 12-18 inches could leave you with a large amount of clippings that could potentially smother seedlings. All mowing should stop before the planting has gone dormant in late fall. Severe problems with noxious or highly invasive weeds may require spot spraying with approved herbicides. Avoid the use of broad-spectrum herbicides.



YEAR TWO:

You will start seeing more color and vegetation this year from your planting. If competition weeds are still an issue in year two, mowing is still very beneficial. Make sure to mow at a height of 12 inches this year because seedlings will now be taller. Mows should be fewer and farther between this year and should fall between March 15th and May 1st

YEAR THREE:

If you’ve performed the recommended maintenance and Mother Nature also has done her part, this year is likely to be the WOW year. A late winter or early spring mowing is a good idea to control new tree growth and shrubs along with any other competition weeds. Prescribed burns can now be scheduled and your local conservation office will assist with a prescribed burn plan. Proper timing of burns is critical depending on your objectives. Spring burns tend to encourage growth of warm season species while helping control cool season species. Prescribed burns are a great way of removing old growth and stimulating new. Check with your local conservation office to see about attending a prescribed burning class. If maintenance is done correctly and timely, your planting should flourish for years to come!

