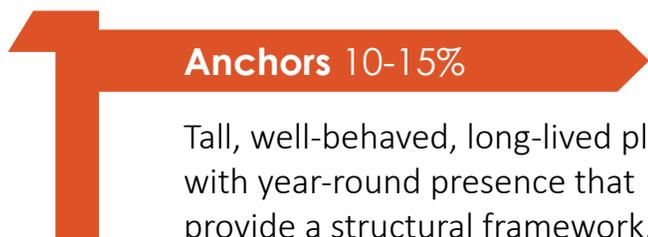


# Less weeds, more WOW

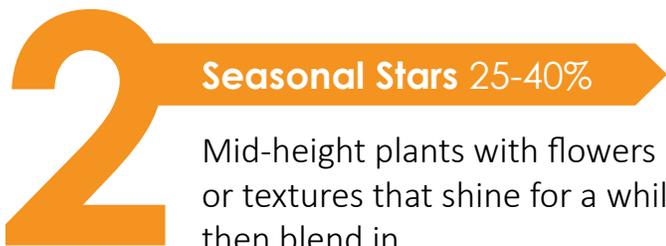
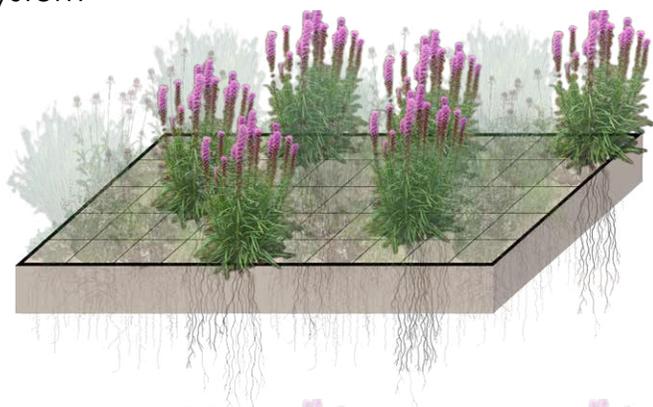
## GARDEN DESIGN GUIDE

For healthy plant communities, try this four-tiered system from *Planting in a Post-Wild World* (Rainer & West).



### Anchors 10-15%

Tall, well-behaved, long-lived plants with year-round presence that provide a structural framework.



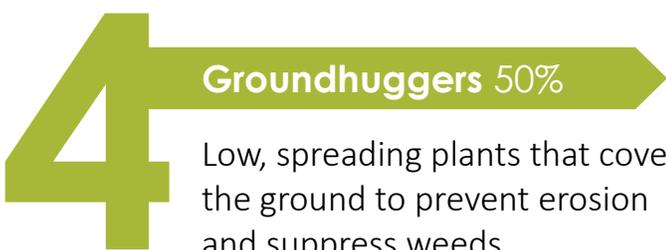
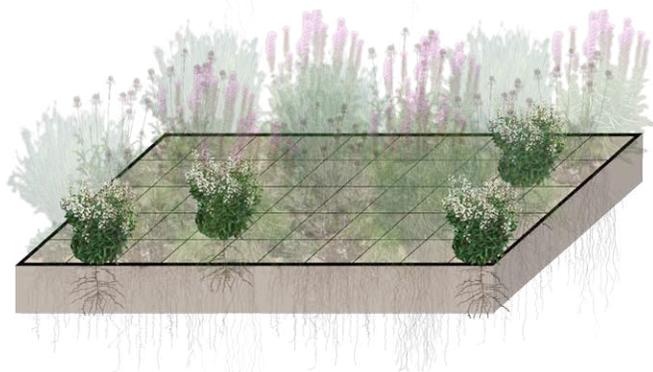
### Seasonal Stars 25-40%

Mid-height plants with flowers or textures that shine for a while, then blend in.



### Placeholders 5-10%

Short-lived plants that reseed to fill gaps and add brief seasonal display.



### Groundhuggers 50%

Low, spreading plants that cover the ground to prevent erosion and suppress weeds.



Want more garden tips? Check out [plantnebraska.org](http://plantnebraska.org).

# Beauty at eye-level, *diversity* on the ground.

This approach works by planting at least one plant per square foot. Tight spacing means faster coverage and fewer opportunities for weeds to sprout. It also works with plants' tendency to cover ground, so that we can celebrate (instead of curse) plants that spread out and pop up in new places.

By tiering plants on top of each other, we're adapting lessons from wild ecosystems to make better gardens—gardens that look good while acting as environmental workhorses. Eye-popping themes of color combine with a lush network of roots and shoots to control weeds, prevent erosion, improve water quality and provide habitat.



Are you using this approach?  
Share your stories at [facebook.com/NeArb](https://www.facebook.com/NeArb).



NEBRASKA STATEWIDE  
**Arboretum**

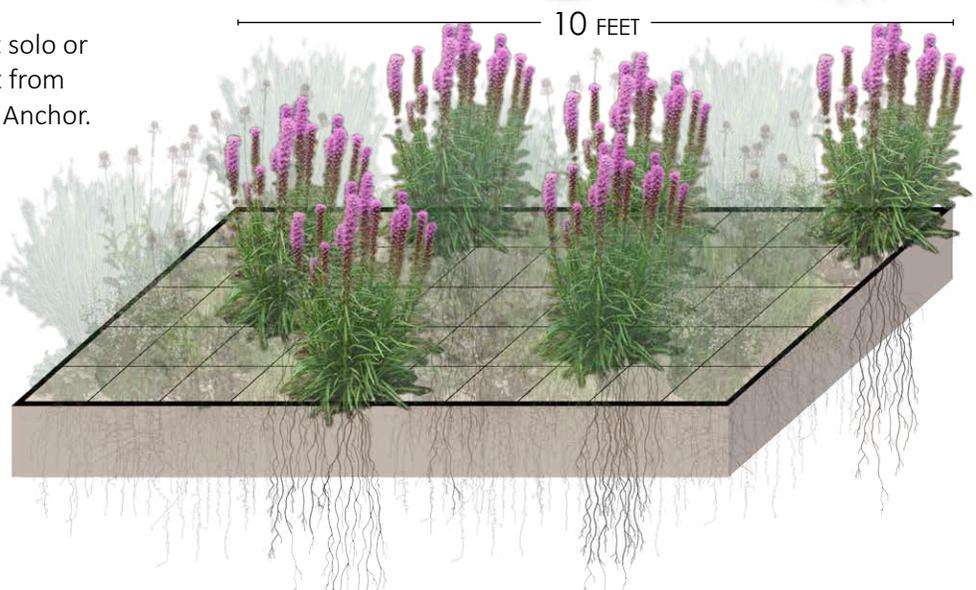
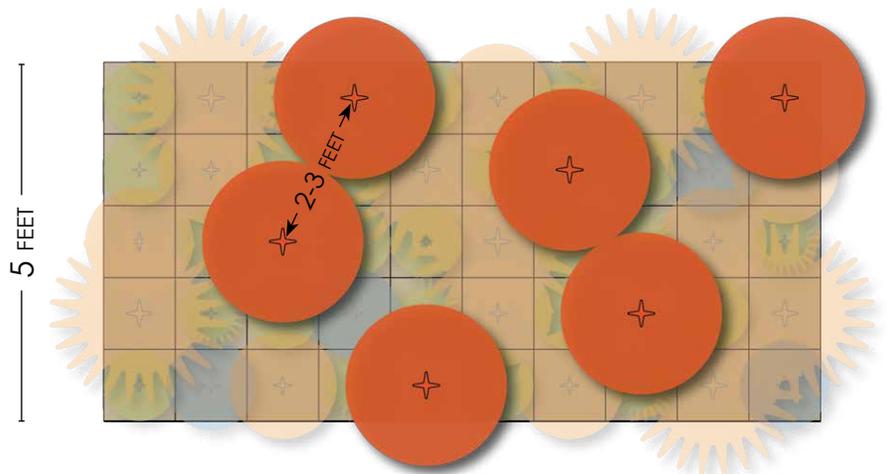
## A Solid Framework

Large, long-lived plants that have distinct forms—trees, shrubs and some upright (3-5 foot tall) grasses and perennials—work well as Anchors. Beware of aggressive spreaders here, which can overtake a garden and increase its height to an uncomfortable level. Sometimes colonizers have cultivated varieties that aren't bullies. 'Northwind' switchgrass is a good example of one that behaves better than the straight species.

On a hike, you might see an old plant solo or in a small group that looks consistent from year to year. This might make a good Anchor.

- arrange first
- singly or in groups
- 2-3 feet apart based on mature spread

*Liatris spicata*  
(12%, 6/50 total plants).



## Anchors to Try in Great Plains Gardens

### Evoking Western Grasslands

Inspired by the droughty plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

#### shrubs

rabbitbrush	<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>
mountain mahogany	<i>Cercocarpus montanus</i>
apache plume	<i>Fallugia paradoxa</i>
western sandcherry	<i>Prunus besseyii</i>

#### perennials

leadplant	<i>Amorpha canescens, nana</i>
butterfly milkweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
blue indigo	<i>Baptisia australis, minor</i>
new jersey tea	<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>
dotted blazingstar	<i>Liatris punctata</i>
Autumn Fire sedum*	<i>Sedum 'Autumn Fire'</i>
carolina lupine	<i>Thermopsis villosa</i>
hoary vervain	<i>Verbena stricta</i>

#### grasses, sedges, rushes

Blond Ambition grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis 'Blond Ambition'</i>
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\* exotic to North America

### Evoking Eastern Grasslands

These sun-loving species manifest the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie, and are short enough to see over.

#### perennials

rose milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>
wild indigo	<i>Baptisia australis, bracteata</i>
new jersey tea	<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>
Gateway joe pye	<i>Eutrochium maculatum 'Gateway'</i>
gayfeather	<i>Liatris ssp</i>
cutleaf coneflower	<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>
compass plant	<i>Silphium laciniatum</i>
meadow rue*	<i>Thalictrum rocheburianum</i>
blue vervain	<i>Verbena hastata</i>
culver's root	<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i>

#### grasses, sedges, rushes

big bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>
Karl Foerster reedgrass*	<i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora 'Karl Foerster'</i>
Northwind switchgrass	<i>Panicum virgatum 'Northwind'</i>
indiangrass	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>

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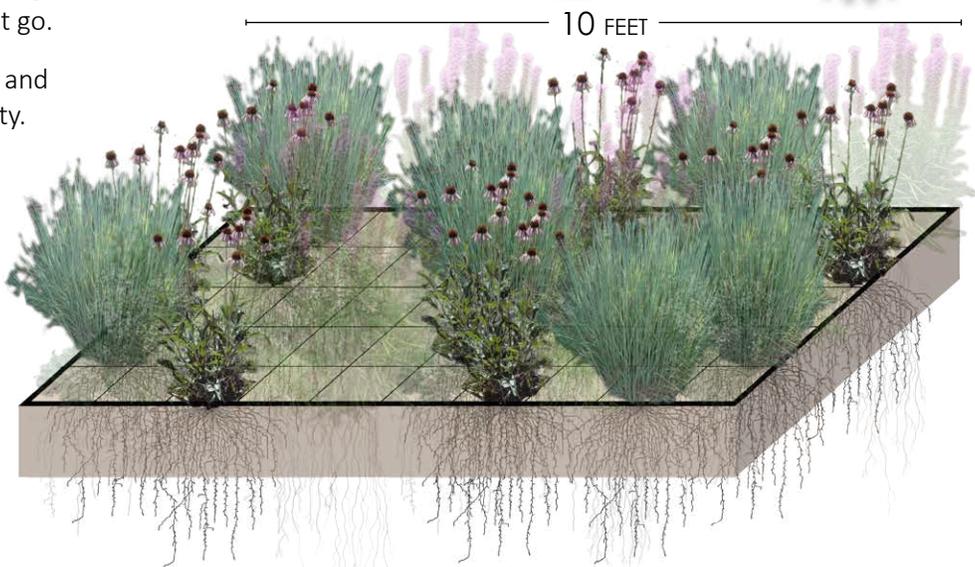
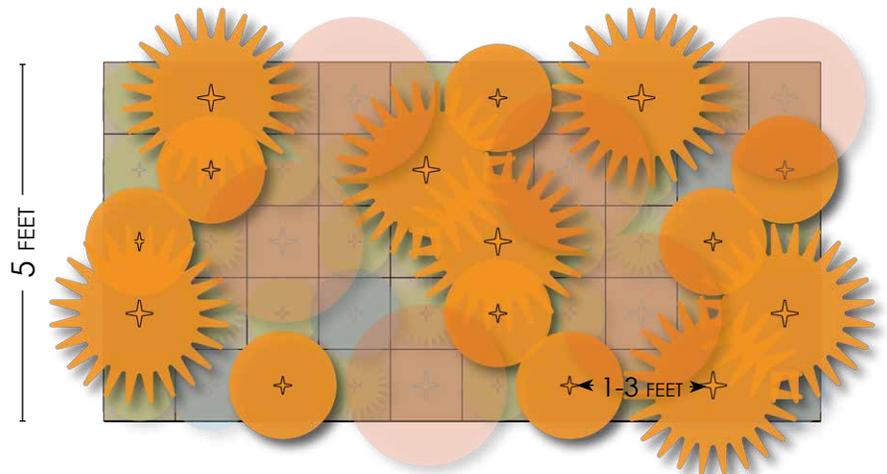
## Emotional Scenes

Mid-height plants (1-3 feet tall) with medium lifespans (5-10 years) often make sense as Seasonal Stars because most of them have a showy attribute or two. One looking scruffy at a certain time of year can hide behind another in its peak season, so use plants with different periods of interest. Striking flowers, bold seedpods and feathery textures add to a garden's beauty, this is especially true when they appear in large drifts that catch the eye and don't let go.

Seasonal Stars can be free to spread and move—this is key for garden longevity.

- arrange second
- in groups or drifts
- 1-3 feet from other plants based on mature spread

*Schizachyrium scoparium*  
and *Echinacea angustifolia*  
(30%, 15/50 total plants).



## Seasonal Stars to Try in Great Plains Gardens

### Evoking Western Grasslands

Inspired by the droughty plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

#### perennials

fremont's clematis	<i>Clematis fremontii</i>
Coronation Gold yarrow*	<i>Achillea 'Coronation Gold'</i>
purple prairie clover	<i>Dalea purpurea, candida</i>
coneflower	<i>Echinacea angustifolia, paradoxa</i>
cushion spurge*	<i>Euphorbia polychroma</i>
Caradonna sage*	<i>Salvia nemorosa 'Caradonna'</i>
stiff goldenrod	<i>Solidago rigida</i>
fendler's aster	<i>Symphyotrichum fendleri</i>
prairie spiderwort	<i>Tradescantia bracteata</i>

#### grasses, sedges, rushes

sideoats grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>
porcupine grass	<i>Hesperostipa spartea, comata</i>
plains muhly	<i>Muhlenberia cuspidata</i>
little bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>
prairie dropseed	<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>

\* exotic to North America

### Evoking Eastern Grasslands

These sun-loving species manifest the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie, and are short enough to see over.

#### perennials

bluestar	<i>Amsonia hubrichtii, illustris</i>
Snowbank boltonia	<i>Boltonia asteroides 'Snowbank'</i>
narrow-leaf coneflower	<i>Echinacea angustifolia, pallida</i>
rattlesnake master	<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>
bottle gentian	<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i>
Mardi Gras helen's flower	<i>Helenium autumnale 'Mardi Gras'</i>
bradbury beebalm	<i>Monarda bradburiana</i>
wild quinine	<i>Parthenium integrifolium</i>
mountain mint	<i>Pycnanthemum tenuifolium</i>
showy black-eyed susan	<i>Rudbeckia fulgida var. speciosa</i>
goldenrod	<i>Solidago riddellii, 'Fireworks'</i>
aromatic aster	<i>Symphyotrichum oblongifolium</i>

#### grasses, sedges, rushes

little bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>
prairie dropseed	<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>

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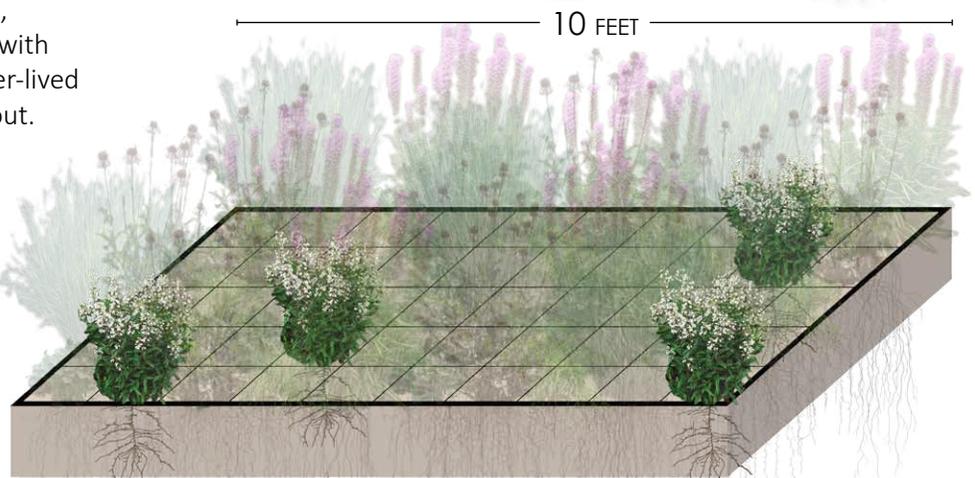
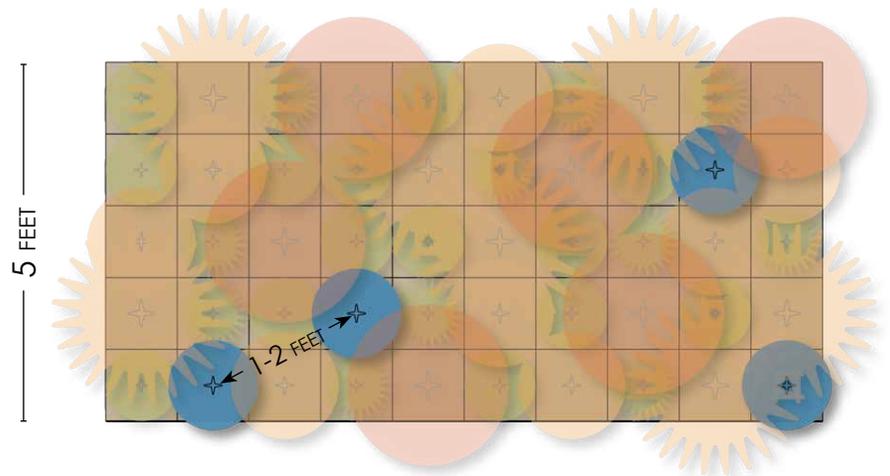
## Filling Gaps

Placeholders are temporary—there when you need them, gone when you don't—which makes annuals, biennials and short-lived plants good candidates for this tier.

In the garden, Placeholders behave like most weeds would, and help cover bare spots to give other plants time to establish. In ecology, these plants are called *pioneer* and *ruderal* species, and are the first to come in after a disturbance like a fire, flood or drought. They don't do well with competition, however, so when longer-lived plants settle in, these species move out.

- arrange third
- singly or in groups
- 1-2 feet from other plants based on mature spread

*Penstemon digitalis*  
(8%, 4/50 total plants).



## Placeholders to Try in Great Plains Gardens

### Evoking Western Grasslands

Inspired by the droughty plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

#### annuals, biennials

mountain bee plant	<i>Cleome serrulatus</i>
tickseed	<i>Coreopsis tinctoria</i>
fleabane	<i>Erigeron ssp</i>
snow-on-the-mountain	<i>Euphorbia marginata</i>
curly cup gumflower	<i>Grindelia squarrosa</i>
black-eyed susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>
greenthreads	<i>Thelesperma filifolium</i>

#### perennials

common yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
hummingbird mint	<i>Agastache rupestris</i>
prairie larkspur	<i>Delphinium virescens</i>
blanketflower	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>
prairie flax	<i>Linum lewisii</i>
penstemon	<i>Penstemon strictus, grandiflorus</i>
mexican hat	<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>

\* exotic to North America

### Evoking Eastern Grasslands

These sun-loving species manifest the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie, and are short enough to see over.

#### annuals, biennials

tickseed	<i>Coreopsis tinctoria</i>
cosmos*	<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>
fleabane	<i>Erigeron ssp</i>
yellowdicks	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>
black-eyed susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>

#### perennials

wild onion	<i>Allium cernuum, stellatum</i>
eastern columbine	<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>
tickseed	<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i>
prairie larkspur	<i>Delphinium virescens</i>
cardinal flower	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>
penstemon	<i>Penstemon ssp</i>
mexican hat	<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>
brown-eyed susan	<i>Rudbeckia triloba</i>
alexanders	<i>Zizia aurea, aptera</i>

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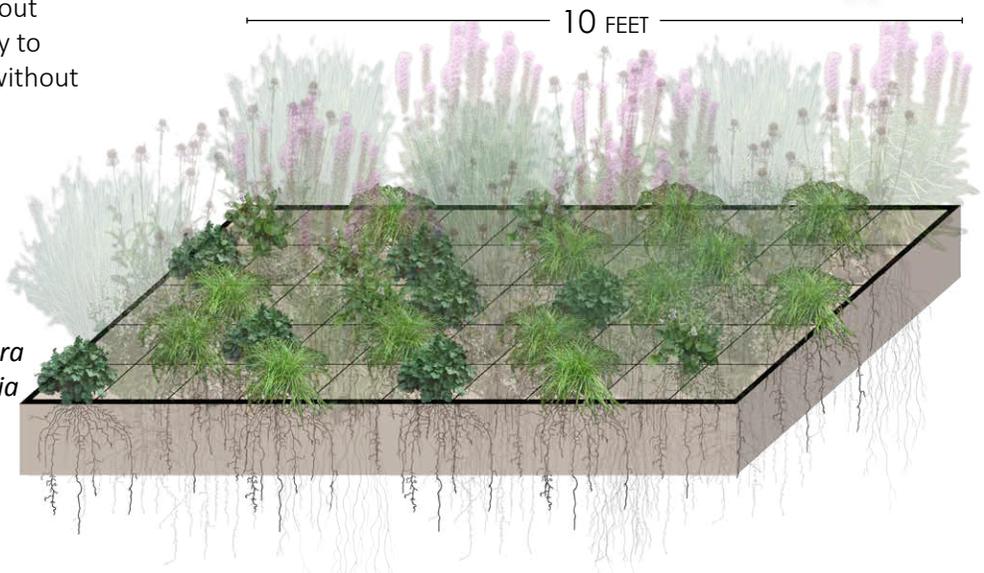
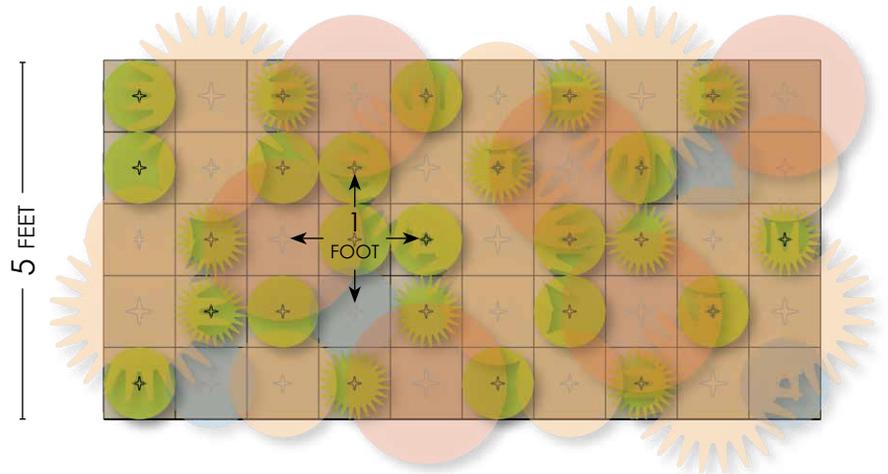
## Living Mulch Network

Groundhuggers are low-growing plants that live underneath the canopy of taller plants in other tiers. This means they need to be shade- and stress-tolerant. Because their job is to cover the ground, many spreading plants perform well as Groundhuggers, but non-spreading plants work too.

While there might be few species of plants used in other tiers, here you can mix it up because Groundhuggers are mostly out of view. This presents an opportunity to increase your garden's biodiversity without compromising the look you want.

- arrange last in open spots until the garden has one plant per square foot

*Carex pensylvanica*, *Heuchera richardsonii* and *Viola sororia* (50%, 25/50 total plants).



## Groundhuggers to Try in Great Plains Gardens

### Evoking Western Grasslands

Inspired by the droughty plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

#### perennials

ornamental onion*	<i>Allium senescens</i> var. <i>glauca</i>
pussytoes	<i>Antennaria parvifolia</i>
poppymallow	<i>Callirhoe</i> 'Logan Calhoun', <i>involuta</i>
hairy golden aster	<i>Chrysopsis villosa</i>
dakota vervain	<i>Glandularia bipinnatifida</i>
primrose	<i>Oenothera latifolia</i> , <i>macrocarpa</i>
prairie packera	<i>Packera plattensis</i>
pasqueflower	<i>Pulsatilla patens</i>
prairie petunia	<i>Ruellia humilis</i>
Snow Flurry heath aster	<i>Symphotrichum ericoides</i> 'Snow Flurry'
prairie zinnia	<i>Zinnia grandiflora</i>

#### grasses, sedges, rushes

buffalograss	<i>Bouteloua dactyloides</i>
blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
junegrass	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>

\* exotic to North America

### Evoking Eastern Grasslands

These sun-loving species manifest the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie, and are short enough to see over.

#### perennials

windflower	<i>Anemone canadensis</i> , <i>sylvestris</i> *
poppymallow	<i>Callirhoe</i> 'Logan Calhoun', <i>involuta</i>
wild geranium	<i>Geranium maculatum</i>
barren strawberry	<i>Geum fragarioides</i>
prairie smoke	<i>Geum triflorum</i>
alumroot	<i>Heuchera richardsonii</i>
daffodil*	<i>Narcissus</i> ssp.
prairie packera	<i>Packera plattensis</i>
Snow Flurry heath aster	<i>Symphotrichum ericoides</i> 'Snow Flurry'
violet	<i>Viola</i> ssp.

#### grasses, sedges, rushes

appalachian sedge	<i>Carex appalachica</i>
pennsylvania sedge	<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>
tollway sedge	<i>Carex praegracilis</i>
path rush	<i>Juncus tenuis</i>

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