

### **Suggestions for Preparation of Soil**

The goal is to have good seed-soil contact without placing the seeds too deep. Most native seeds do well at two times the thickness of the seed. The soil should be slightly firm, but not compacted, and a fluffy seedbed will allow the seed to work into the ground to deep. If the plot is weedy, take the time to control weeds before planting. Control weeds by multiple herbicide applications or many light tillages before planting. It is best to sacrifice a growing season to utilize weed control methods before seeding the plot if it has an existing grass or weed cover. Cropping with Roundup Ready or Liberty Link soybean and seeding into the stubble after harvest is a suitable method

### **Installation**

There are different methods of installing seed. The choice of method is dependent upon the type of area you are working with and timing. Broadcast seeding in winter gives the seed a chance to work down into the soil to the proper depth as the seed would do in the wild. Seeding later than mid-March can require no-till installation but also requires great care to not place the seed too deep. A no-till drill can be used to broadcast by taking the drop tubes off of the no-till units and letting the seed tube hang down and drop directly on the ground.

### **Broadcast Seeding**

The preferred timing is after the ground has frozen & thawed and has loosened up a thin layer of soil on the surface through frost heaving. A carrier is sometimes needed to accommodate the small amount of seed to be spread over a large area. Suitable carriers are rice hulls, vermiculite, pelletized lime for acidic ground, and oats for erodible soil. The rate of a carrier is dependent on the no-till drill used. Drills with a fluffy seed box usually put out 8-10 lbs per acre at the lowest setting, and the balance needs to be made up with a carrier if there are no warm season grasses in the mix. When spreading seed, always go a little bit light to ensure you have enough seed to cover your planting area. You can still go over high priority areas twice.

### **Drill Seeding**

Some seed should be visible after drilling. Get off of the tractor and verify the depth. Mixes can be put through the fluffy box with a carrier.

### **Seeding Dates for Optimum Results**

For best results, plant mixes with forbs from November 15 to March 31.

For best results, plant mixes with a heavy grass content from April to June.

## **What to Expect Each Year After Planting**

Year One: (The Prairie Sleeps) The individual species in your native planting are mostly perennials and are putting down roots rather than large amounts of top growth the first year. It is normal to have a mixture of seedlings and weeds in the first year. Most of the weeds are annuals and mowing before seeds mature is necessary. This is temporary! You'll see several annual or biennial native flowers blooming. The best way to manage the problem is to mow vegetation down to 6-12" when vegetation reaches 18". It is essential to adjust the mowing height to knock down any tall weed seed heads and to avoid mowing down shorter seedlings. Watering and the use of fertilizer is unnecessary and only benefits the weeds in growing.

Year Two: (The Prairie creeps) At this stage, the native plants have had time to establish their root systems. They have now begun to focus on their above-ground growth, and during this time, the native plants begin to take over the area in place of the weeds. At this point, the best management strategy is to continue the mowing process through mid-June. You may also spot-spray with appropriate herbicides if you are comfortable with plant ID.

Year Three: At year three, now you'll see blooms from Spring-Fall. The best management practice is to continue mowing or to burn the area during the winter season (December – February).