



WILDFLOWER & GRASS HAND SEEDING
**RECOMMENDATIONS
&
THINGS TO CONSIDER**

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TIMING

There are two ideal time frames for seeding based on seasonal rainfall – early fall and late winter. You should aim to be done seeding no later than the second week in February, however, in years with more rain, it’s possible to seed after this. The most effective technique is to have seed down one week before a “germinating rainfall,” which is a stretch of 5-7 days with consistent moisture.

If there are no rains for two weeks after seeding, you may need to use irrigation to keep the top inch of soil moist, allowing the early growth stage of the seed to continue.



WEED CONTROL



Before planting any native seeds, it’s important to properly weed your growing area. This is especially true for seeding larger areas or when replacing a lawn. Oftentimes large banks of weed seeds can sprout alongside your native plants, outcompeting and overgrowing them.

To make sure your native seeds thrive, we recommend “flushing out” those weed seed banks before putting down your seed. For optimal timing, begin an aggressive round of weed control in the early fall. Mowing or hand-pulling the weeds can be effective, but the most best method is using a safe, foliar herbicide. Once the first round of weeds has died, perform another round of weeding. If needed, irrigating between weeding rounds can help bring more weeds out. For best results, this flushing out process should be repeated at least twice. When using an herbicide, make sure to wait the amount of time specified on the label before applying your native seed.



SOIL PREPARATION

The key to success is often found in preparation. The same concept applies to your soil and the germination of your native seeds. Seeds will only germinate with good soil contact, so preparing your soil before seeding is crucial. Ensure your soil is as bare as possible for the maximum amount of seed-to-soil contact. If the entire grow area can't be completely cleared, rake out as much dead plant material from the area as you can to create bare patches of soil for the seed to make contact with. For best results, the soil should be friable, or easily crumbled, and not heavily compacted or scraped clean.

While not always necessary, composting can help with seed growth if done correctly. Compost should be tilled into the soil at a 6-inch depth. If adding compost, only add Phosphorus, Potassium, and micronutrients before the initial seeding. Do not add Nitrogen at this phase of seeding. Nitrogen is best added after seed germination for the most benefits. We recommend two applications of 3/4N per 1000 sq.ft. during the first growing season.

SEED APPLICATION

Efficient and even seeding is in the technique. We recommend using a “Whirly Bird” style seeder that is capable of broadcasting seed mixes in at least a 15 foot radius. The seeder should also have an adjustable opening to allow increasing or decreasing the seeding rate. For an even distribution, the first of the seed should be applied over the entire grow area in two passes from different directions. If necessary, an inert additive such as chalk or rice husks can be combined with the seed for visibility as well as to increase the overall volume of the seed. The use of an additive makes it easier to achieve uniform application. For the most even distribution possible, try to seed on a day with little to no winds.



After the first 2/3 of the seed has been applied, lightly rake the soil to incorporate them into the top 1/8-1/4 inch of mineral soil. The final 1/3 of the seed can now be applied to the surface of the soil using the same technique as before. This final step ensures diversity in the depths of the seed, maximizing the soil-to-seed contact.

MULCH APPLICATION

Although not necessary in every application, mulching is an excellent way to prevent water runoff and soil surface erosion, protecting seeds in their most vulnerable state of germination. For the best mulching results, apply a thin, less-than-2-inch layer of wood, leaves, or straw immediately following the final seed application. In situations with steep slopes, additional treatments like silt fences, sediment filter socks, and erosion control blankets may be necessary.



IRRIGATION

A benefit of using native seeds is that, once they are established, they typically will not need additional irrigation. However, for the first one to two years of establishment, we recommend irrigating the planting area for the best long-term results. If irrigation is the first moisture of the season, you should plan on applying water for 6-8 days before the seeds are able to connect with the water in the soil. If you begin the seeding process in November, the ETo rate is around 1/8 inch per day. When seeding in the late fall, watering every other day is recommended. From December through February, the ETo rate is typically around 1/16 inch per day, so plan to irrigate every 3rd day. If natural rainfall occurs, skip watering on any days with more than 1/4 inches of rain. New seeds typically take 6-10 weeks before their roots are deep enough to hit the water table. Once this happens, they will be able to draw groundwater and should no longer need additional irrigation.