



Working with Mother Nature

When do I plant my native grass & wildflower seed?

Every grass and wildflower species has its own optimum planting requirement to successfully establish in your native plant garden or landscape. **Think like Mother Nature;** native plants spread their seeds in the fall, seeds obtain soil contact during the fall and winter, and then the seeds germinate in the spring. Mother Nature's process is called **Stratification**.

Stratification

Definition: Stratification is a pre-germination treatment used to break dormancy in seed; many of our native wildflower seeds require a period of cold moist conditions in order to germinate. Our winter temperatures and moisture can fulfill these requirements naturally. **Example:** Arrowleaf balsamroot: requires 90 days of stratification in order to germinate, so a fall planting is best.

Grass Seed

- Most of our native grasses do best with a spring planting.
- If planting in Fall, plant as late as possible to prevent germination until Spring.
 - This protects the grass seedlings from the harsh winter conditions.
- A Spring planting also reduces the chance of rodents and insects feeding on the seed.

Wildflower Seed

- See the [Seeds Table](#) on our website for a list of species requiring stratification.
- A **Fall/Winter planting** will be recommended for the seeds requiring stratification. October through February seedings work for most native wildflower species.
- If a **Fall OR Spring planting** is recommended, this means no stratification is required and the seeds may be planted in late Fall/Winter OR Spring.
- By "Spring" we mean EARLY Spring. On the Palouse, March or April, are good times to plant because we still have moisture. Seeding can be done in May if it is a wet spring. June is typically too late unless you water the area regularly.
- Seeds requiring a very short stratification period (30 days) can be planted in March.

Take Home Message for planting time of Palouse Native Seeds

- Plant at appropriate time according to instructions
- To seed all seeds at once, late Fall/Winter is best
- If you prefer seeding twice (some in the spring and some in fall), separate fall and spring seeds, plant Fall seeds in late fall/early winter, and plant Spring seeds in Early spring (March or April)



Palouse Prairie Native Grass and Wildflower Seeding Instructions

“The point is that if gardening is to be an enjoyable avocation, you must learn to get along with the natural world as it exists in your corner of it.” from Bebe Miles book Wildflower Perennials for Your Garden

1. **Site Selection:** Is your site wet or dry? How much sunshine or shade? How well does the soil drain? Choose a well-drained site with good sunlight for most prairie plants. See the [Seeds Table](#) on our [website](#) for light requirements. Upland prairie plants do not like “wet feet”.
2. **Site Preparation: Weed Control!!**
 - Prepare your site early keeping in mind that clearing it of existing vegetation may require a full season or a full year of mechanical and herbicide treatments.
 - a. The quickest and easiest way to remove weeds is by using a Glyphosate herbicide at least two weeks before planting time. Several applications over several growing seasons may be necessary to remove the most stubborn weeds.
 - b. A combination of hand-pulling and spraying is recommended, but methods will vary depending on type of vegetation being removed.
 - c. For non-chemical weed removal, place clear plastic down for 1 growing season.
 - d. If possible, irrigate site to encourage weed seeds to germinate early then kill the small weeds by your chosen method.
 - e. Then irrigate again to kill a second round of weeds, repeat as needed.
 - f. Remember that weedy areas may have a seed bank of weeds that will germinate over the years; diligence on your part **will** pay off!
3. **Seedling Establishment:**
 - a. Once existing vegetation is removed from planting site, you are ready to put down your seed and/or plants.
 - b. No fertilizer is required; most wildflowers do best in soils with low nitrogen levels.
 - c. Rake or harrow the top layer of soil.
 - d. Mix seed with sand to expand material and help achieve a uniform application.
 - e. Broadcast _ the seed in one direction and then broadcast _ in the other direction.
 - f. Lightly rake again to help ensure good soil to seed contact.
 - g. Spread mulch lightly over seeding to help prevent soil erosion and reduce seed predation from birds and rodents.
 - h. Maintain a moist seed bed through spring and early summer to ensure good germination and establishment.
4. **Maintenance: WEED CONTROL!** We cannot stress enough the importance of diligent weed control for the first few years. With careful control of weeds, your natives will thrive. Start small and expand gradually.

**“First year they sleep – second year they creep
– third year they leap!”**