



# Planning, preparing, and sowing your fall wildflower seed mix

## STEP 1

### ASSESS YOUR SITE

CNP offers a wide variety of wildflower mixes that are specific to different ecotypes. It is imperative that you get to know your site, the soil type, sun exposure, & erosion prone areas to determine which mix is best suited for your environment. Your site should be free of weeds, grasses, and existing vegetation prior to sowing your wildflower mix. Your seedbed (soil) should also be properly prepared where it is free of rocks and clumps of dirt. Please refer to Flathead Conservation District's [Site Preparation Recommendations](#) if you have existing vegetation and/or your seedbed needs to be prepared.

## STEP 2

### DETERMINE SQUARE FOOTAGE

Once you've determined the best wildflower mix for your site, you are now ready to determine how much seed you will need. Determine the size

of your planting by pacing or measuring the area. Length in feet multiplied by width in feet equals area in square feet. 43,560 square feet = one acre.

#### General rule of thumb:

<b>125 FT<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>500 FT<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>2000 FT<sup>2</sup></b>
1 OZ MIX	1/4 LB MIX	1 LB MIX

A planting rate in the minimum range is usually sufficient to establish a good stand of wildflowers on prepared soil with adequate maintenance. Overseeding should be considered in successive years where establishment has been poor.

## STEP 3

### PREPARE YOUR SEED

We recommend using a filler material such as sawdust, rice hulls or sand to "stretch" your seed coverage. This ensures equal distribution of seed through your planting plot. It is also advantageous as a visual tool for equal distribution. The total square footage of your plot will determine how much filler material you need.



It is common to mix 2/3 parts filler to 1/3-part seed. Using a 5-gallon bucket, bowl, or other container, thoroughly mix your seed and filler together prior to sowing. For small wildflower plots <125 sq. ft. a filler material is not necessary.

#### STEP 4 **SOW YOUR SEED** (Late October-February)

Hand broadcast the seed mix evenly over the prepared wildflower plot. It is recommended you sow in a north to south direction, preceded by an east to west direction. In some cases, your mix can be divided in four equal parts, and each part is handbroadcasted separately to ensure adequate coverage. Dividing your planting area and seed mix into smaller parts can facilitate even seed distribution. Sow sparingly when you begin.

Once the seed/filler has been broadcasted, it is recommended to gently rake & compact the soil using a lawn roller or similar device to ensure good seed to soil contact. If you are sowing with snow on the ground, this step is not necessary.

#### STEP 5 **PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE:**

As Ralph W. Emerson said "Adopt the pace of nature; her secret is patience." There are common misconceptions that you will have a beautiful wildflower meadow in the spring following a fall sown seed mix. Native plants grown from seed take time. Do

not get discouraged and remember the three P's: Patience, Persistence, & Perseverance!

#### STEP 6 **SPRING/SUMMER MAINTENANCE**

Maintenance is essential to a successful wildflower planting. The site should be evaluated periodically during the growing season to determine if expectations are being met. Practicing the following strategies will aid in a productive long-term wildflower stand:

**WEED CONTROL:** Monthly weed control is essential to a healthy and satisfying wildflower plot. Weeds should be eliminated as soon as they can be recognized either by pulling or selective cutting with a string trimmer or shears.

**FERTILIZATION:** Fertilizers are usually not necessary for native seed plantings. If soil fertility is exceptionally low, a low nitrogen fertilizer can be used. Organic matter such as compost is also an option. If you suspect a problem with soil fertility, we recommend a soil test and/or plant tissue analysis.

**SUPPLEMENTAL WATERING:** Fall plantings don't typically need to be watered immediately after sowing if seed has been sown strategically before a rainfall event. In the spring keeping the topsoil moist for three to six weeks will enhance germination. The goal should be to keep the ground moist, but not oversaturated

where seed may wash away. In moist climates, regular rainfall may make supplemental watering unnecessary. In arid climates or during drought conditions, up to 1/2 inch of supplemental water per week may be required to maintain an optimal display. Watering will not be necessary in the second year, except during extreme drought. After the recommended 3-year period, the native planting should be mature enough to eliminate any supplemental watering.

**RESEEDING:** Plantings can be reseeded in preceding years if there are bare spots that did not experience germination or spots that broadcasting missed.

**FALL MOWING AND CLEAN-UP:** For a neat appearance 2- & 3-year-old plots may be mowed to a height of four to six inches after they have "gone to seed". In our climate, October is a good timeframe to mow should your concern be aesthetics & utilizing the viable seed to reseed your plot. However, many native plantings are left untouched in the fall to enhance forage and habitat for many wildlife species. Your goal and objective should be considered prior to implementing either of these philosophies.

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