



Traditional Planting Instructions for Linn Pollinator Mix

This pollinator seed mix was developed with plants native to Linn County, Iowa. It includes 38 varieties of milkweed, forbs, and grasses that will provide season-long nourishment for monarchs, bees, and other pollinators.

These instructions include a herbicide application to kill existing vegetation. If you prefer not to use herbicide, we also offer instructions for an organic planting method.

An old saying goes, “Success is 90 percent preparation, 10 percent perspiration.” That adage is true here, too: Site preparation is the largest determinant of your prairie’s success (and it does take some perspiration). Please do not skimp on site prep or invasives are likely to overtake your prairie.

Step 1: Site Selection

- Select a site that is sunny and well drained (or at least not wet).
- Identify a site that is relatively free of invasive plants. If currently planted with grasses, it’s best if the areas has been mowed for several years.
- If you intend to plant in a road right of way (ROW), contact your city or Linn County to learn more about the requirements for planting in this space.

Step 2: Site Preparation

If the site currently has existing vegetation, an effective way to ensure the success of your prairie planting is to apply herbicide once, twice, or possibly three times, depending on effectiveness. Please read and follow the herbicide label instructions and use responsibly. Note: We recommend you refrigerate your seeds until you are ready to plant.

- Use a product with glyphosate (the main ingredient in Round-Up) and 2,4-D. Make sure the product you use is non-persistent, in other words, it does not include an herbicide that lingers in the soil after application.
- If you cannot find a product with both types of herbicides in one combination, please follow this two-step process:
 1. Apply a broadleaf herbicide first, such as one containing triclopyr or 2,4-D. (Menards sells Bayer Advanced Brush Killer Plus, which contains triclopyr; Home Depot sells a 2,4-D product under the Compare-N-Save label.)
 2. A week later, apply glyphosate. (Menards, Home Depot, and Lowes sell this under the Round-Up, Spectracide, Bayer, and/or Compare-N-Save labels.)
- After two weeks, survey site. If vegetation persists, apply herbicide a second time. If your site has vegetation that was not previously mowed, you might consider applying herbicide a third time.

Step 3: Plant Seeds

Planting can occur at two times of year, if your site is ready. You can plant either in May/June or late Fall after the first or second front. . If you have applied herbicide, wait at least two weeks before you plant any seeds.

- Mix seed with clean sand to help distribute it across the site more evenly. Use 1 to 2 pounds of sand per 1 ounce of seed.
- Broadcast the seed by hand using even, sweeping gestures. Take your time and make multiple passes walking in multiple directions.

- After the seeds are sown, lightly rake the area to ensure greater seed-to-soil contact.
- Walk thoroughly across the planting site to press the seeds into the soil. You can also roll an old tire over the planting site to achieve the same effect.

Step 4: Maintain Your Prairie Planting

Even with your careful site preparation, you will still see some annual weeds pop up. Annual weeds grow quickly and can shade out young prairie seedlings and guzzle valuable moisture.

- In the first couple months after planting, mow or use a weed trimmer on your planting to allow more light to reach the prairie plants and provide the prairie seedlings greater access to available moisture. If your mower cannot be set at a very high setting (8 inches) you will need to use a weedwhacker or trimmer. Mow or trim a few times waiting until the plant material reaches ten inches or so; more regular mowing tends to favor lawn weeds like trefoil, crabgrass, or clover.
- Water your plants when you don't receive sufficient rain, particularly during extended dry periods. Saturate the soil and give them a good drink.
- Don't expect your native plantings to look wonderful after the first year. During this time, natives put most of their energy into root development. Your prairie will look its best starting in the third or fourth year.
- Once the prairie is established, mow around the perimeter of the planting, signaling to others that this is a prairie that is cared for and maintained.

Step 5: Let Your Neighbors Know You Are Part of a Movement!

Prairies take two to three years to establish, so it's often a good idea to add signage that identifies your site as a prairie-in-progress. The Monarch Research Project sells signs, at cost, with the "Monarch Zones, Pollinator Zones" logo. You also can find signs sold by other organizations or make your own. Either way, be sure to let your neighbors know that you are part of a bigger effort to plant 10,000 acres of butterfly and pollinator habitat in Linn County!

More detailed instructions on how to plant and maintain a prairie can be found at the following websites:

www.unitedseeds.com/how-to.html

www.prairiemoon.com/blog/how-to-grow-a-prairie-from-seed

www.shootingstarnativeseed.com/about-natives/restoration-guidelines/

Species included in the Linn County Pollinator Seed Mix:

Swamp Milkweed
Common Milkweed
Canada Anemone
Prairie Sage
Butterfly Weed
Sky Blue Aster
Heath Aster
Smooth Blue Aster
New England Aster
Canadian Milk Vetch
Partridge Pea
Showy Tick Trefoil
Pale Purple Coneflower
Cream Gentian

Sneezeweed
Early Sunflower
Button Blazing Star
Prairie Blazing Star
Great Blue Lobelia
Wild Bergamont
Purple Prairie Clover
Prairie Cinquefoil
Foxglove Digitalis
Mountain Mint
Yellow Coneflower
Black-Eyed Susan
Sweet Black-Eyed Susan
Showy Goldenrod

Prairie Spiderwort
Blue Vervain
Hoary Vervain
Culvers Root
Golden Alexanders
Lead Plant
Little Bluestem
Side-Oats Grama
Canada Wild Rye
Virginia Wild Rye
Rough Dropseed
Prairie Dropseed



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Your friends at the Monarch Research Project

www.monarchresearch.org