

Seed Bed Preparation and Establishment

Basic Establishment Guidelines for Native Grass and Forbs on crop fields

December 2014

The most important part of establishing a successful stand of native grasses and forbs is seedbed preparation. By following these guidelines landowners can save time and money.

Crop Field Restoration:

It is very important that you have a firm level seed bed with minimal surface residue. The following steps will help guide you through the process. The procedure for site prep will vary on the current state of the field, equipment available, and weather conditions

Soybean Stubble

Soybean stubble is the most economical ground to seed native grasses and flowers because it requires the least amount of soil preparation and provides the best situation for seeding.

- No soil cultivation needed. Minimal Leveling of ruts
- Seed with conventional or no-till prairie grass. drill ¼" or less in depth.

Corn Stubble

Corn stubble requires more soil preparation steps, but is also a good bed for seeding.

- Rake/bale stalk residue.
- Seed with conventional or no-till prairie grass drill ¼" or less in depth.

Corn Stubble Option 2

- Cultivate to a normal soil preparation for crops.
- Ensure soil is firm enough for your footprints to sink <1". Either through your cultivation process or rolling.
- Seed with conventional prairie grass drill ¼" or less in depth.

Seeding Tips:

- Seeding should occur between May 15-June 30.
- When seeding, keep the drill 1/3 full to ensure consistent seed flow.
- If broadcast seeding use 1.5 times the normal seeding rate and roll or cultipack again after seeding.
- Many Vendors operate on a "first come first serve" so plan ahead while ordering seed. If in a program ensure seed mix meets standards.
- Either 5-7 days prior or 5-7 days post seeding apply a glyphosate herbicide to any emerging weeds within the field. Be sure not to apply any chemical with residual characteristics



Management after Seeding:

Year 1 – Seeded by June 30th

- **Keep the planting clipped to a height of 6 to 8 inches until August 15th.** This ensures that sun light can reach the new seedlings, and helps control annual weeds.
- Do not be concerned with sites that appear to be weedy with little grass emergence during the 1st year.

Year 2

- Spot mow any areas of heavy weed infestations prior to flowering throughout the growing season.
- If Canada Thistles or other undesirable weeds exist on the planting, spot spray with Milestone prior to flowering. **Do not broadcast over the whole field.** It is best to consult PF Biologists, SWCD or NRCS techs with concerns prior to spraying.

Year 3

- As needed, spot mow/spray any areas of heavy weed infestations all growing season.

Years 4+

- For CRP contracts, follow your Schedule of Operations for Mid-Contract management operations.
- If not in CRP, then manage your grassland every 3-5 years to keep the native grasses and flowers rejuvenated and to keep the volunteer trees from encroaching.



Several weeks after seeding



Year 1 mowing



Years 2-4 growth of grasses and flowers



Years 4+ controlled burn for mid-contract mgmt.



The flowers begin to pop after the burn and in years two and beyond

Please consult with your local USDA Service Center for a more in depth look at your site's specific establishment and management strategy.

