



MAINTENANCE

The maintenance of pollinator plantings can be challenging due to the high forb diversity and difficulty of removing weeds without harming native plants or pollinators. It is also important to leave areas un-mowed or burned in the fall to provide winter nesting habitat. Maintenance methods should be selected that will be the most efficient and cost-effective for the project. These methods should be included in an operation and maintenance plan for the project. Maintenance activities are often combined, such as mowing or burning followed by hand pulling or spot herbicide application.

• **MOWING** •••••

Mowing annual and biennial weeds to 5-8 inches with a Flail-type mower as needed during the first 1-2 years of establishment is important to provide sunlight and decreases competition for seedlings. Spot mowing of weeds may be needed after establishment to prevent weed seed production, though it is important to leave plant stems for pollinator nesting, and seedheads for plant propagation.

• **HAND WEEDING** •••••

This is often most effective after rainfall when weeds are easier to pull, and there is less soil disturbance. Digging can also be used to remove clumps of invasive grasses.

• **PRESCRIBED BURNING** •••••

This will maintain diversity and control woody species after establishment. Burning should only be conducted on 1/4 to 1/2 of large sites each year to minimize impact on insects. Patchy burns are ideal to provide areas of refuge for wildlife. Burns are often done in the fall or early spring before plants emerge (every 3-5 years) to promote floral diversity and minimize impacts on pollinators.

• **CONSERVATION GRAZING** •••••

Conservation grazing following grazing plans can be used to reduce the percent of cool-season grasses in conservation plantings, and promote floral diversity.

• **SPOT HERBICIDE APPLICATION** •••••

Some perennial weeds (Canada thistle, Reed canary grass) are most effectively removed through spot herbicide treatment, but should only be sprayed when target species are not in bloom. Many species can be spot mowed early in the season to prevent seeding and treated in mid to late fall.

• **BIOCONTROL** •••••

This is a long-term maintenance strategy to minimize herbicides and control weeds and invasives. Biocontrols are available for: Leafy spurge, Spotted knapweed, Purple loosestrife, and Canada thistle.

See BWSR [Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines](#) and BWSR's [What's Working](#) webpage for additional information about project maintenance.