

Native prairie meadows and grasslands are some of the most diverse and resilient ecosystems in North America. They provide valuable habitat for local wildlife like birds, butterflies and bees. They also prevent erosion, slow runoff, suppress weeds and prevent soil nutrient loss. Seeding is a common and easy way to create prairie meadows and grasslands of 0.2 ha or more. Follow these four steps to get started.

Step 1 - Analyze, Plan, Design

Determine the best site for your prairie meadow or grassland. Consider aesthetics, topography and light, moisture and soil conditions. Choose seed mixes appropriate for the conditions of your site. Different seed mixes may be needed if conditions are inconsistent.

Be cautious of commercial wildflower seed mixes. These sometimes include non-native and [invasive species](#). Choose native seeds from [local seed suppliers](#) for the best results.

Step 2 - Prepare the Site

Preparation activities depend on the site conditions. A mostly weed-free site may only need tilling. Keep in mind that disturbing soil can expose invasive plant seeds that will require management.

Removing invasive species can take up to two growing seasons. This is an important step that requires patience. Management techniques include applying regulated herbicides, solarization and repeat mowing.

When seeding over turfgrass, mechanized tilling is recommended. Tilling breaks up the thatch to allow for seed-to-soil contact needed for germination.

Step 3 - Seed the Site

Spring and fall are the best times to sow. Use a simple broadcast seeder or a tractor-pulled seeder or seed drill. Many seeds will germinate in the first year, but some will take longer. A cover crop, like millet (*Panicum miliaceum*), oats (*Avena sativa*) or Canada wild rye (*Elymus canadensis*), should also be planted at the same time to provide short-term erosion and weed control.

Step 4 - Maintain the Site

Some maintenance of your newly seeded site will be required. Engage a team of employees or volunteers to pull and deadhead weeds. Under normal conditions with the right seed mixes, watering shouldn't be necessary. In the event of a drought, use a sprinkler system to replenish water loss.

Once the site has matured, a [controlled burn](#) in the spring is recommended to reduce weeds. Check with your local fire department for restrictions. You can also mow the area every two years in late fall. Use the mower's high setting (7.6-10.6 cm) to suppress shrub and weed growth.

Resources

- [Prairie & Meadow Plants for Landscaping](#)
- [Native Prairie and Meadow Gardens and Landscapes for Homes, Businesses and Institutions](#)
- [Native Grassland and Habitat Restoration at CVC](#)
- [Guide to Establishing Prairie and Meadow Communities in Southern Ontario](#)
- For more information on cover crops, see Section 3. [Cover Crop Selection Tool](#)

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Credit Valley Conservation's Greening Corporate Grounds program

Website: cvc.ca/gcg

Email: gcg@cvc.ca