



Native Grass Establishment

Planting Time – Native grasses establish best in early spring from mid March to mid May. This is the time when soil moisture is more abundant and temperatures are cooler. With supplemental irrigation, native grasses can also be sewn in mid August through September. Dormant seeding is another option granted the soil is not frozen.

Site Preparation – Preparing a good seedbed with ensure good seed to soil contact and provide for a good growing environment. Loosen the soil to a depth of 3 to 4 inches by raking, tilling or plowing. Remove excess weeds and debris. Apply a high phosphorous fertilizer such as 18-46-0 after soil preparation. The final seedbed should smooth, free of large clumps and firm.

Seed Application – The most efficient method of seeding is drill seeding. This method places the seed down in the soil where the moisture lies and is best for seed to soil contact. Applying the seed with a cyclone spreader can also be used for larger areas, and hand broadcast for smaller plots. When broadcasting seed, raking the seed into the soil and tamping the soil after application is needed for the seed to have contact with that soil as well as being where the moisture is.

Mulching - For Improved moisture retention, mulching is encouraged. Straw or other good insulating organic matter laid out to a maximum depth of ¼ inch will give the seedlings every chance to survive. Mulching also helps protect the seed from blowing away or being eaten by rodents or birds.

Watering – The biggest reason for seedling failure during establishment is lack moisture. Keeping soil moist but not saturated during the first 5-6 weeks of the young seedlings life will ensure the seedlings quicker establishment.

Weed Control – Weeds grow and establish much quicker that grass plants, and rob precious moisture away from the young seedlings. Mowing the competing weeds before they seed out is perhaps the best method. Herbicide application can also be applied when the plants have reached maturity. Even then, this can take 6 to 8 months for the native grasses to mature. If wildflowers are in the mix, herbicides should not be used.

Establishment Time – Under ideal growing conditions, grass growth should occur in 4 to 6 weeks, with full development occurring in 6 to 8 months. Native grasses need time and good cultural practices to look as they do in their natural, native environment. In time native grass habitats offer the ultimate low maintenance environment, with low water requirements, weed control and habitats for wildlife.



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