



TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Forest Resources: Wildflower Establishment

Wildflowers add aesthetic appeal to any property. Old fields, low meadows, and other sunny sites can be managed for native wildflowers to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and songbirds, and offer a display of color and interest from summer into fall.

Soil Test:

Four to six weeks before planting have the soil analyzed for pH level and fertility. The Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service or Natural Resource Conservation Service can assist with questions regarding soil analysis.

Site Preparation:

An effective method of killing weeds and grass is spraying the area to be planted with a herbicide such as glyphosate (Roundup). Refer to the label for ornamental site preparation. A second application may be necessary before planting if there is weed regrowth. If a second application is required, wait at least two weeks before direct sowing of seeds.

Wildflowers do not generally require a lot of soil preparation, but seeds need good soil contact to germinate. Lightly cultivate the soil with a rake or hand tool to a depth of 1/2 - 2 inches. Deeper tilling brings viable weed seed to the surface.

Seed Application:

On small areas, broadcast seeds evenly by hand or use a drop spreader. It is helpful to mix clean, dry sand with the seed to add volume and aid in even distribution. The recommended rate is one to two parts sand to one part seed. Cover lightly with soil, firm in by stepping on the area, and mulch lightly with straw.

Perennial Species Seeding Rates (lbs/acre)

- Black-eye Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) 2
- Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) 10
- Coreopsis/Tickseed (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) 10
- Moss verbena (*Verbena tenuisecta*) 6
- Ox-eye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*) 5
- Showy primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*) 1
- Stiff Vervain (*Verbena stricta*) 3

Germination:

Some seeds will germinate in 10 – 20 days, whereas others will germinate in early spring of the following year. Best germination occurs in planting locations with at least six hours of sunlight per day, little foot traffic and frequent watering or rainfall. If the site is on an erodible slope, apply a low nitrogen fertilizer (8-8-8) at the seedling stage to help establish wildflowers.

Maintenance:

During the first two years, good maintenance to control weeds is critical. The area can later be maintained by mowing.

Mow after the nesting season (mid March through late August) to remove woody competition and redistribute seed heads. Mow the wildflower meadow high, leaving at least 8 – 12 inches, so crowns of the plants are not injured.

Inventory flowering plants at regular intervals during the flowering season. Late August will reveal an entirely different array of flowers than in early June. Check areas for “new” species brought in by weather or animals.