

BEFORE YOU PLANT

Connect with local resources to consider the best course for you and your land.

TIMELINE

- Previous crops, residual herbicide, season, seed mix, weather, etc.
- What site preparation is necessary?

NECESSARY EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- Is the planting area compatible with equipment and row spacing?
- What type of seeder (no-till drill, broadcast or drop) will be used?

SEED

- Where and when to get seed?
- What is the right seed mix for this site?

COST

- Is cost-share available?
- How much will the seed cost?

CONSERVATION GOALS

- Where should the prairie be planted to maximize its benefits?
- How can the prairie be maintained for wildlife habitat?

MAINTENANCE

- How will the prairie be spot-sprayed to minimize invasive weeds?
- Who can I hire to do early establishment mowing, prescribed burning, or conservation grazing/haying?

RESOURCES

Tallgrass Prairie Center <https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org>

Service provider list, seed mix calculator, how-to videos, technical resources, and more

Iowa State University STRIPS <https://www.prairiestrips.org>

A landowner's guide to prairie strips, FAQs, technical research, additional guidance, cost of prairie strips information, and more

Pheasants Forever <http://www.iowapf.net>

Cost-share options, local Private Lands Biologist contact information, guidance on seed mix, planting location, and site preparation

Xerces Society <https://xerces.org>

For invertebrate conservation resources related to pollinators

Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/programs>
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/ia/newsroom/factsheets>

Cost-share options, local technician, additional conservation planning, and more

Resources Enhancement and Protection <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/REAP>

Cost-share options, funding allocations, state and county funding, and additional resources

Trees Forever Pollinator Habitat Conservation <http://www.treesforever.org>

Cost-share options, specified programs, and additional guidance

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Service Program <https://www.fws.gov/partners>

Cost-share options, specified programs, and additional guidance

Monarch Conservation Toolbox <http://www.namonarchs.org/category/bmp>

Resources and information related to best management practices for monarch conservation

Practical Farmers of Iowa <https://practicalfarmers.org>

Field days, workshops, and habitat resources



QUESTIONS? FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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Past and Current Funders:

The University of Northern Iowa, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa Nutrient Research Center, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa Economic Development Authority, The New York Community Trust, North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

Collaborators:

Iowa State University STRIPS project, Borlaug Learning Center ISU, Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever, Monarch Joint Venture, Women Food and Agriculture Network, AmeriCorps Land and Water Stewards, ISU Extension, The Xerces Society, The Sand County Foundation, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Hertz Farm Management, Peoples Company, and Iowa Watershed Approach

PRAIRIE
ESTABLISHMENT
— FOR —
LANDOWNERS

FOR HEALTHY SOILS, CLEAN WATER,
AND WILDLIFE HABITAT





An edge-of-field buffer strip

WHERE TO PLANT PRAIRIE

Determine the proper location for your farm and farming equipment:

IN-FIELD STRIPS

—Roughly on the contour

Placing contour prairie strips within row crops will maximize their effectiveness. We recommend planting strips at least 30 ft. wide, but strip width is ultimately determined by field layout and farming equipment.

- Convert 10% of a row-cropped field to prairie. Plant at the foot slope of the crop field with additional narrow strips following the contour of the slope to the extent practicable. Studies at one Iowa site showed this configuration can result in 95% sediment reduction and 42% reduction in water runoff [ISU STRIPS].
- Or, determine the amount that works with your equipment and farm configuration while still intercepting surface runoff.

EDGE-OF-FIELD PLANTINGS

— Filter strips or buffer strips

If in-field strips will not work with your farming configuration, consider establishing a filter strip or buffer strip to reduce runoff. Permanent native vegetation can be used to intercept sediment and nutrient runoff before entering a waterbody while also providing habitat for wildlife and pollinators.

MARGINAL AND UNPROFITABLE AREAS

Reduce time, effort, and inputs while gaining habitat for wildlife and pollinators. Consider converting consistently unproductive and unprofitable land to permanent vegetation. When you plant native vegetation, you can maintain or even increase profits.

GENERAL ADVICE

Collaborate with seed dealers to ensure seed mixes are effective with the soil type.

Be patient with your native planting. It normally takes 3-5 years for a planting to fully establish. In the first few growing seasons, prairie plants spend much of their energy establishing extensive root systems. With time, the prairie plant's above-ground biomass will match the below-ground growth.

Take advantage of existing resources when planning and preparing for your planting. There are many resources available to help, such as the ISU STRIPS FAQ page.

If you are unsure about placement or if your site would be a good fit for a native planting – connect with a local resource to set up a site visit.

Prairie Strips are now eligible for cost-share options through the newly approved USDA CRP [CP-43].



Echinacea pallida
Pale Purple Coneflower

BEST PRACTICES

Seed Purchase

- Plan well in advance - seed mix design and ordering take time.
- Consult with a conservation planner and native seed dealer(s) to design a seed mix to fit your site and goals.
- Use only native plant species.
- Ask for "yellow tag" seed that is certified to originate from your region.
- Purchase seed well before your seeding date. If plans are delayed, store seed in cool/dry conditions.

Planting

- Make sure the equipment used to plant the natives is clean of weed seeds and correctly calibrated.
- Ensure your planting will be accessible to mow at least three times in the first growing season.
- For best results, do not drive on the planting in the first two years.

When using a native grass drill:

- The seed must be properly mixed.
 - Calibrate each box [front and back] separately.
 - Add inert material for plantings less than one acre.
- If seeding large plantings, it is best to break the planting up into sections to avoid errors and running out of seed.