



PRAIRIE AND POLLINATOR ESTABLISHMENT

A YEAR BY YEAR MAINTENANCE GUIDE FOR RESTORED AREAS

Patience is required:

It may seem like the native plantings in the restored areas have been a failure especially in the first two to three years of growth. Most of what you will see will be dandelions, thistle, and a cover crop that look like wheat. Have patience. Remember that prairie plants put most of their energy into root growth in the first few years. The Village will maintain the proper environment for the plants by mowing, controlling weeds and invasive species and potentially performing prescribed burns.



YEAR ONE

During the first growing season, when the vegetation reaches about one foot in height, we will mow the site to a height of six inches. Remember that the weeds strategy is to grow fast and tall, and cutting dramatically affects the weeds and prevents them from producing seeds. However, the native plants are too short at this time to be injured by a six-inch mowing. We would ask that you refrain from watering or fertilizing restored areas because those only benefit weedy species. Native species are adapted to natural conditions and require little to no watering or fertilizing. We may do some selective herbicide treatment of weedy species during the first growing season based on recommendations from our ecologist.



“The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.”
– Theodore Roosevelt

YEAR TWO AND THREE



Some of the weedy annuals that germinated in year one will have died and the number of weed seeds in the soil will begin to greatly decrease. The native species, with their well-established root system, will now begin to allocate a greater portion of their energy to above-ground growth. What you begin to see is called “succession,” the process by which one plant community replaces another plant community. In this case, it is the beginning of the prairie species replacing the weed community. Remember, this is not an “all-or-nothing” process, and some weed species can persist for years. Prairie plants, with their increased production of above ground structures and their superior below-ground (root) systems, will gradually out-compete and replace the weeds. Expect some prairie plants to flower in year two and even more into year three.

The Village will most likely mow the area one or two times during the second and third growing season to control weedy species. We may also perform a prescribed burn in year three. Again, we will do selective herbicide treatments based on the recommendations from our ecologist.

We ask that you refrain from pulling out the weeds by roots. Since soil disturbance is essential for the weeds to continue to survive, even the small area of disturbed soil from pulling a weed can allow many weedy seeds that are still in the soil to emerge.



YEAR FOUR AND BEYOND

Generally, after year four, the prairie plants will be well on their way to mature establishment and few weedy species will be left. Years four and beyond should become increasingly colorful as more and more of the prairie plants reach sufficient size (vigor) to flower. The Village will continue to manage and perform maintenance on the area into the future through prescribed burning, mowing, herbiciding and interseeding.

