

# Mesic Prairie Northwest 35-442

Updated: 2023

This mix has been designed for areas of Northwest Minnesota with mesic soils and full sun for at least 70% of the day where land is being converted from other uses such as agriculture or non-native grasses to a prairie reconstruction with the goals of providing wildlife habitat, soil stabilization, and water quality benefits. This mix has been designed for projects focused on establishing high plant diversity including mitigation projects.



Partners also include collaboration among Non-profits, Seed vendors, SWCD, Tribal Governments, Consultants, County and Cities. (See partner list on [website](#))

35-442		Mesic Prairie Northwest Mix				
Code	Common Name	Scientific Name	PLS lb/ac	% by PLS lb/ac	Seeds/ft2	% by Seeds/ft2
andger	Big Bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	0.56	1.62%	2.06	3.24%
boucur	Sideoats Grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	1.90	5.51%	4.19	6.60%
brokal	Prairie Brome	<i>Bromus kalmii</i>	0.38	1.10%	1.12	1.76%
elycan	Canada Wild Rye	<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	0.75	2.17%	1.43	2.26%
elytra	Slender Wheatgrass	<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i>	0.24	0.70%	0.61	0.96%
elyvir	Virginia Wild Rye	<i>Elymus virginicus</i>	0.75	2.17%	1.16	1.82%
panvir	Switchgrass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	0.31	0.90%	1.59	2.51%
		<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>				
schsco	Little Bluestem	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	1.28	3.71%	7.05	11.11%
sornut	Indiangrass	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	0.75	2.17%	3.31	5.21%
spocom	Rough Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus compositus</i>	0.18	0.52%	1.98	3.12%
spohet	Prairie Dropseed	<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>	0.10	0.29%	0.59	0.93%
		<b>Grasses Subtotal</b>	<b>7.20</b>	<b>20.87%</b>	<b>25.08</b>	<b>39.51%</b>
carbri	Plains Oval Sedge	<i>Carex brevior</i>	0.24	0.70%	2.56	4.03%
carvul	Brown Fox Sedge	<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>	0.06	0.17%	2.20	3.47%
		<b>Sedges &amp; Rushes Subtotal</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.87%</b>	<b>4.76</b>	<b>7.50%</b>
achmil	Common Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	0.01	0.03%	0.65	1.03%
allste	Prairie Onion	<i>Allium stellatum</i>	0.05	0.14%	0.20	0.32%
amocan	Lead Plant	<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	0.09	0.26%	0.40	0.64%
anecan	Canada Anemone	<i>Anemone canadensis</i>	0.03	0.09%	0.09	0.14%
anevir	Tall Thimbleweed	<i>Anemone virginiana</i>	0.01	0.03%	0.10	0.16%
artlud	Prairie Sage	<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i>	0.01	0.03%	0.92	1.45%
ascinc	Swamp Milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	0.05	0.14%	0.09	0.14%
ascsyri	Common Milkweed	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	0.06	0.17%	0.09	0.14%
astcan	Canada Milkvetch	<i>Astragalus canadensis</i>	0.05	0.14%	0.31	0.49%
		<i>Chamaecrista fasciculata</i>				
chafas	Partridge Pea	<i>Chamaecrista fasciculata</i>	0.06	0.17%	0.06	0.09%

corpal	Prairie Coreopsis	Coreopsis palmata	0.02	0.06%	0.07	0.12%
dalcan	White Prairie Clover	Dalea candida	0.19	0.55%	1.33	2.09%
dalpur	Purple Prairie Clover	Dalea purpurea	0.31	0.90%	1.71	2.69%
descan	Showy Tick Trefoil	Desmodium canadense	0.06	0.17%	0.12	0.19%
dryarg	Prairie Cinquefoil	Drymocallis arguta	0.02	0.06%	1.69	2.66%
echang	Narrow-leaved Coneflower	Echinacea angustifolia	0.03	0.09%	0.08	0.12%
glylep	Wild Licorice	Glycyrrhiza lepidota	0.04	0.12%	0.06	0.09%
helmax	Maximilian's Sunflower	Helianthus maximiliani	0.06	0.17%	0.29	0.45%
helpau	Stiff Sunflower	Helianthus pauciflorus	0.03	0.09%	0.04	0.07%
helhel	Ox-eye Sunflower	Heliopsis helianthoides	0.05	0.14%	0.12	0.18%
heuric	Prairie Alumroot	Heuchera richardsonii	0.01	0.03%	2.57	4.05%
liaasp	Rough Blazing Star	Liatris aspera	0.03	0.09%	0.18	0.28%
lialig	Meadow Blazing Star	Liatris ligulistylis	0.05	0.14%	0.18	0.29%
liapyc	Prairie Blazing Star	Liatris pycnostachya	0.05	0.14%	0.20	0.32%
monfis	Wild Bergamot	Monarda fistulosa	0.05	0.14%	1.29	2.03%
oenbie	Common Evening Primrose	Oenothera biennis	0.01	0.03%	0.33	0.52%
pycvir	Virginia Mountain Mint	Pycnanthemum virginianum	0.02	0.06%	1.62	2.55%
ratpin	Yellow Coneflower	Ratibida pinnata	0.04	0.12%	0.44	0.69%
rosark	Prairie Wild Rose	Rosa arkansana	0.05	0.14%	0.02	0.03%
rudhir	Black-eyed Susan	Rudbeckia hirta	0.03	0.09%	1.01	1.60%
solnem	Gray Goldenrod	Solidago nemoralis	0.01	0.03%	1.10	1.74%
solrig	Stiff Goldenrod	Solidago rigida	0.03	0.09%	0.45	0.71%
solspe	Showy Goldenrod	Solidago speciosa	0.03	0.09%	0.88	1.39%
symeri	Heath Aster	Symphyotrichum ericoides	0.01	0.03%	0.73	1.16%
symlae	Smooth Blue Aster	Symphyotrichum laeve	0.03	0.09%	0.61	0.95%
symool	Sky Blue Aster	Symphyotrichum oolentangiense	0.03	0.09%	0.88	1.39%
thadas	Purple Meadow Rue	Thalictrum dasycarpum	0.05	0.14%	0.13	0.21%
trabra	Prairie Spiderwort	Tradescantia bracteata	0.01	0.03%	0.04	0.06%
verstr	Hoary Vervain	Verbena stricta	0.03	0.09%	0.31	0.49%
verfas	Common Ironweed	Vernonia fasciculata	0.06	0.17%	0.53	0.83%
zizapt	Heartleaf Alexanders	Zizia aptera	0.05	0.14%	0.22	0.35%
zizaur	Golden Alexanders	Zizia aurea	0.09	0.26%	0.36	0.57%
		<b>Forbs Subtotal</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>5.80%</b>	<b>22.50</b>	<b>35.45%</b>
cover	Oats/Winter Wheat	Avena sativa/Triticum aestivum	25.00	72.46%	11.14	17.55%
		<b>Cover Crop Subtotal</b>	<b>25.00</b>	<b>72.46%</b>	<b>11.14</b>	<b>17.55%</b>
		<b>Total</b>	<b>34.50</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>63.48</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# Seed Mix Enhancements or Substitutions

List of Additional Species to Add Diversity or for Substitutions

## Grasses:

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Bouteloua hirsuta</i>	Hairy Grama
<i>Bromus ciliatus</i>	Fringed Brome
<i>Dichanthelium oligosanthes</i>	Scribner's Panic Grass
<i>Elymus riparius</i>	Riverbank Wild Rye
<i>Elymus villosus</i>	Downy Wild Rye
<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	Junegrass
<i>Stipa sparea</i>	Porcupine Grass - untrimmed

## Forbs:

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Allium canadense</i>	Wild Garlic
<i>Astragalus crassicaarpus</i>	Ground Plum
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Fireweed
<i>Galium boreale</i>	Northern Bedstraw
<i>Glycyrrhiza lepidota</i>	Wild Licorice
<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	Autumn Sneezeweed
<i>Helianthus maximillianii</i>	Maximilian's Sunflower
<i>Heuchera richardsonii</i>	Alumroot
<i>Liatris punctata</i>	Dotted Blazing Star
<i>Lysimachia ciliata</i>	Fringed Loosestrife
<i>Monarda punctata</i>	Horsemint
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	Obedient Plant
<i>Ranunculus fasciculatis</i>	Early Buttercup
<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	Gray-headed Coneflower
<i>Solidago ptarmicoides</i>	Upland White Aster
<i>solidago riddellii</i>	Riddell's Goldenrod
<i>Symphyotrichum oolentangiense</i>	Skyblue Aster
<i>Teucrium canadense</i>	Germander
<i>Thalictrum dasycarpum</i>	Tall Meadow-Rue
<i>Verbena stricta</i>	Hoary Vervain
<i>Zizia aptera</i>	Heart-leaved Alexanders

# Mesic Prairie Northwest Seed Mix Guidance

**Seed mix name:** Mesic Prairie Northwest 35-442

**Geographic area:** Minnesota, Statewide

**Year of development:** 2009

**Year/s of update:** 2023

**Status** (Standard or Pilot mix): Standard

**Primary and Secondary Functions:**

*Primary* – Wildlife habitat and soil stabilization, water quality benefits

*Secondary* – Carbon Sequestration, emission reductions, pollinator habitat, songbird habitat

**Similar State Mixes:** 35-242 Mesic Prairie General, 35-542 Mesic Prairie Southwest, 35-642 Mesic Prairie Southeast

**Compatible NRCS Practice Standards:** 643

**Compatible Minnesota CRP Practices:** CP23A, CP25, CP28, CP38E

**Suitable Site Conditions:** Areas with mesic soils and full sun for at least 70% of the day where land is being converted from other uses such as agriculture or non-native grasses to a prairie reconstruction.

**How to Modify for Site Conditions and Goals:** This mix includes a list of additional species that can be considered to add species diversity. Site conditions such as sunlight, soils, hydrology and existing vegetation along with functional goals for the project such as carbon sequestration, pollinator habitat, and benefit to grassland bird species can all have an influence on species selection and the modification of seed mixes.

**Site Preparation:** Primary goals for site preparation tend to focus on controlling weed species and providing ideal growing conditions for seed or plants to be installed. Site preparation methods vary depending on past uses of the site that can contribute to soil condition and the amount and type of problematic weed species present. The protection of microorganism populations and native seedbanks, preventing soil erosion, and managing weed establishment are all considerations during the site preparation process. In most cases, non-herbicide methods are preferred over methods that include repeated, intensive herbicide methods to protect aquatic organisms and soil microfauna, but on large acreages herbicides may be the most efficient method of controlling some invasive perennial species. It is common for many conservation plantings to transition from corn or soybean production. Fields that have been in agricultural production will need a chemical history in order to know if there will be herbicide carry-over that may prevent growth or harm vegetation establishment. Another consideration is that several chemicals being used for weed control, including Glyphosate act as pre-emergents or post-emergents (designed to inhibit germination) and can be a problem for native vegetation establishment from seed. Investigate prior chemical use and labels to help define probability of having chemical carryover that could/should be addressed by using temporary cover crops to allow time for chemicals to break down. If a site is dominated by problematic perennial weeds such as smooth brome, quack grass or bluegrass, it will need to have a longer site prep time prior to planting. One way to do this is to use 1-2 seasons of agricultural row-crops or densely seeded temporary covers. Temporary covers both act to smother problematic weeds and improve overall soil structure and function. For sites in agricultural production, herbicide application is often recommended, as tilling alone may re-suspend the rhizomes, allowing them to continue growing.

## Seeding Dates

Prairies seed mixes can be installed in the spring or fall. Spring seedings should be done on or around May 1-July 1 when soil temperatures are at least 60 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Fall seeding should occur when soil

temperatures fall below 50 degrees Fahrenheit for a consistent period of time (usually around October 15 in the northern half of the state and November 1 in the southern half of the state). Fall dormant seedings can help reduce weed pressure during the first year of growth because cool-season grasses and forbs germinate earlier and start competing with weed species right away. Frost seedings are also an option if the snow cover is not too deep. For a frost seeding, seeding rates may need to be increased by 25 percent due to lower germination rates and loss of seed that is consumed by wildlife over the winter months. In general, grasses are most successful with a spring/early summer seeding while forbs are most successful with a fall dormant seeding, as most forbs require a winter to break their seed dormancy before they can start growing. Planting dates will vary depending on the weather in a particular year and where the planting site is located (e.g., northern Minnesota versus southern Minnesota). Consult with native seed suppliers to determine the best planting dates for that year.

### **Seedbed Preparation**

Methods that are used to prepare a seedbed can vary depending on the type of seeding equipment to be used. If a traditional native seed drill will be used, a smooth, firm seedbed is required. Soybean fields generally are sufficiently prepared for a native seed drill, but sites that were recently tilled will require additional soil treatment such as harrowing and rolling to prepare an adequate seedbed and prevent seed from being buried too deep. Broadcast seeding can be conducted on soybean or corn fields, or fields that have been disked, as long as the soil is allowed to settle before seeding. Some practitioners have found that broadcast seeding on a smooth surface (not tilled or disked) leads to the establishment of higher diversity. It is important that the soil surface is not too hard packed, so cultipacking or light harrowing of crop fields before broadcast seeding may be needed. Seed can be lost on smooth surfaces, so it is recommended to seed into temporary cover crops or to roll sites after seeding.

### **Temporary Cover Crops and Mulch**

The use of short-lived temporary cover crops help stabilize project sites and minimize the need for additional mulch in preparation of planting native seed mixes. They can also provide time to observe weed problems, and to allow for proper weed control before fall seeding. Temporary cover crops such as oats or winter wheat (the two species most commonly used) should be mowed to 10-12 inches before seeds mature (or harvested upon maturity) to prevent re-seeding. Other cover crops typically used in agricultural fields, such as buckwheat, pennycress, and radishes, can help stabilize soil, build soil quality, or provide weed competition as part of restoration projects. Also see NRCS Agronomy Technical Note 31. If you are seeding into a temporary cover, it is recommended to use a native grass drill to maximize seed to soil contact. When using a broadcast seeder, it is recommended to increase seeding rates to maximize the seed to soil contact.

### **Seeding Methods**

A variety of seeding equipment is used for upland prairie seeding including broadcast seeders, traditional native seed drills, no-till drills, Brillion seeders and Trillion seeders. Specialized native seed drills can handle a wide variety of seed (fluffy, smooth, large and small) and low seeding rates. Since no-till drilling can plant directly into a light stubble layer, this method reduces erosion on the newly seeded site. Conventional grain drills are not capable of handling diverse seed sizes and are unlikely to provide satisfactory results. While no-till native seed drills can plant through light stubble, success is still likely to be greatest when most excess residue is removed. For broadcast seeding equipment should be used that is designed to spread mixes with different sized seeds (e.g., Vicon Seeders).

### **Management Methods –**

*Integrated Pest Management* – Land managers and seed mix practitioners should utilize [Integrated Pest Management](#) in their efforts to establish and manage plantings. Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is an

environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on the use of a combination of practices (conservation grazing, haying, prescribed burning, etc.) to successfully establish and manage native vegetation while minimizing the use of chemicals and accomplishing goals such as the protection and restoration of pollinators and other beneficial insects. Ultimately, using a variety of practices is the most effective, sustainable, and culturally appropriate way to achieve project goals.

### *Establishment Mowing*

Mowing can be an important step in the establishment of upland prairie restoration sites. Mowing at least twice the first season and once the second season with a flail mower or stalk chopper (to prevent smothering plants) is often needed to decrease competition and to provide sufficient sunlight for seedlings. Haying is another method to remove mowed vegetation that prevents smothering of the new seeding. Problematic weeds should be mowed to between five and eight inches before seed is allowed to set (usually as weeds reach 12-14 inches). Mowing height should be raised as native plants establish. Periodic mowing involves mowing the entire planting throughout the first growing season to help prevent a weed canopy from forming and to allow slower germinating plants a chance to grow and be productive. Ideally, periodic mowing is meant to keep the vegetation at around knee height. Mowing should take place once a month or after vegetation reaches 18" in height. Mowing should be done at a raised height between 4-6 inches. Care should be taken to avoid mowing the planting too frequently or too aggressively, such as weekly or shorter than the recommended height as this can damage the native vegetation and cause the planting to fail. The timing and frequency of mowing should be planned to allow sufficient light to reach native plant seedlings and preventing weed seed production. Sites with low weed competition due to sandy soils or other factors may not need mowing.

### *Spot Mowing*

After vegetation has established it may be beneficial to spot mow areas with invasive or noxious plants. Spot-mowing can slow some of the aggressive and fast-growing invasive plants while allowing the native species to become established. Spot-mowing should be done at a raised height between 4-6 inches in order to target the invasive plants and to not damage the native species. Spot-mowing for control of invasive or noxious weeds can be done every year to ensure planting health, even during 10 establishment years. Care should be taken to avoid mowing the planting too frequently or too aggressively, such as weekly or shorter than the recommended height as this can damage the native vegetation and cause the planting to fail. A list of noxious/invasive weed species that should be eradicated can be viewed at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's website.

### *Prescribed Burning*

Prescribed burning is beneficial to remove thatch, control invading woody and invasive plants in prairies, fertilize the soil with ashes, stimulate seed germination and new plant growth, and increase diversity in plantings. Burning is typically initiated after the third or fourth years of establishment, after native vegetation is reaching maturity. Uplands benefit from burning every three to five years. The timing of a burn can help with management goals. Late spring burns are used to combat cool-season non-native species such as brome and reed canary grass. Burning a portion of the property each spring instead of an "all at once" burn will leave undisturbed nesting cover for ground nesting birds. Fall and spring burns should be alternated periodically to simulate natural variation. Burn plans are needed to define the details of how the burn will be conducted, who will be involved and for contingency planning. In many cases, permits are also required. It is recommended to only burn one-half or less of a project site at a time if they are large (over 50 acres), or don't have any adjacent refuge such as other conservation lands adjacent to the site for wildlife species. Partial burns and burns that are patchy may also benefit pollinator populations if timed correctly (when pollinators are not actively foraging, or pollinators have pupated and are mobile).

### *Spot Treatment of Weeds*



Problematic perennial weeds that cannot be managed effectively with other methods may require spot treatment with herbicide for sufficient control. Examples include reed canary grass, smooth brome, quack grass, purple loosestrife, Canada thistle, Kentucky bluegrass, crown vetch, and birds-foot trefoil. In some cases, herbicide treatment is not conducted during the first or second year of establishment to avoid impact to seedlings, but it may be important to control some weeds before they have a chance to spread. A common practice for Canada thistle control involves clipping seedheads while they are in the bud stage (usually early June) and conducting herbicide application with a broad-leaf specific herbicide in the fall (mid to late October). This timing limits the application of herbicide while pollinators are active. If herbicides will be used it is important that monitoring indicates that they are needed, and treatments are made with the goal of removing only the target plant or plants. Herbicides should be selected and applied in a manner that minimizes risks to human health, beneficial and nontarget organisms, and the environment. For example, they should only be used when pollinators and other insects are not active (A common approach is to mow or graze invasive weeds in the summer followed by herbicide application in the fall). Minimize herbicide first year/spot spray year 2. Unless significant problem weeds show up.

**What to Expect in Year 1:** During year one of growth many native grasses and flowers will remain about one to three inches tall. The mowing will play an important role to keep weeds managed so the native plant seedlings receive sufficient water and sunlight. The planting may have a somewhat weedy appearance this first year (see establishment mowing paragraph above).

(IMAGE)

**What to Expect in Year 2:** During year two the native grasses and flowers may reach their mature height and some of them may flower. Mowing may still play a key role in managing weeds and allowing seedlings to grow.

(IMAGE)

**What to Expect in Year 3 and Beyond:** By the end of year three most of the native plants will be nearing maturity and should flower. There may be some species that are slow to establish and may not show up for several years.

### **Problem Solving**

*Poor Establishment After Year 1* – It is often difficult to determine if a seeding is successful during the first year as establishment may vary depending on weather conditions and some species may be slow to establish. It is typically best to wait until the second year to conduct any corrective actions. Look for species such as Black-Eyed Susan flowering in year 1 for confirmation the seeding was a success.

*Poor Establishment After Year 2* – If native plant seedlings are not establishing about every one to two feet it may be necessary to inter-seed some species into the planting. If this is a concern it is recommended to inspect the site during the growing season to recommend what species could be supplemented.

*High Annual and Biennial Weed Competition* – Typically, annual and biennial weed competition is not a big problem in prairie plantings as they are short lived and as long as mowing is conducted before seed is set, they should not add additional seed into the planting.

*High Perennial Weed Competition* – Dense establishment of perennial species can be a problem as it can prevent the establishment of forbs. Prescribed burning, and or herbicide application may be needed to manage perennial weeds.

*Low Forb Diversity After Year 3* – If grasses and sedges are establishing successfully but there is a lack of forbs it is recommended to conduct inter-seeding of additional forbs in late fall or after a prescribed fire in spring or fall. See the [Xerces Society guide](#) for additional information about inter-seeding wildflowers.