

Interseeding Native Grasses and Forbs into an Existing Native Grass Stand

Site Preparation for Interseeding

12/10/2014

The purpose of this sheet is to provide landowners with useful information on how to interseed native grasses and forbs into their existing native grass stand.

Guidance:

These are the necessary steps to ensure a successful native prairie interseeding. As with anything, it is important to put time and effort into the prep work to ensure a successful planting. The following are suggested ways of going about the site prep, there are certainly many different ways a landowner can go about it. This will be a good reference guide, but it doesn't hurt to contact your local conservation office for additional guidance. With any native prairie planting it is important to be patient for the planting to grow; it may take 2-5 years before you notice any difference. You may have to get some disturbance in the site a few years after the Interseeding took place to actually get those newly planted forbs and grasses to grow. What disturbance means is to: burn, graze, mow, hay, or any combination of those things. Prairies developed under the disturbance of fire and grazing. Burning and grazing sites can really help the growth of the native plants. When you disturb your native prairie planting it allows the forbs and annual species to grow well which will provide better habitat for wildlife as well as a better control of the invasive weeds. Mowing the site for a couple years after the Interseeding may be necessary, consult your local conservation office on this. And by all means do

NOT spray the site once you have interseeded it, except for the initial spraying after planting. You may have a flush of "weedy" annual species, but those weedy annuals actually provide very good habitat and forage for a myriad of species. The more species one plants, it will improve your; pollinator, pheasant, and other wildlife habitat, weed control, establishment time frame, and aesthetics.



Wood Lilly in NW MN (Photo by: Adam Kleinschmidt)

Preparation Steps:

Consult your local USDA Service Center office for appropriate dates to start site prep if your land is currently in a program.

Do the prep – don't cut corners

- Hay the site off in late summer as short as possible to remove some of the vegetation



And/or,

- Spray the site with 2 quarts of glyphosate per acre in late summer/early fall
 - Make sure if you mix other herbicides in there is no long lasting residual
- Use prescribed fire in late summer/early fall to remove the vegetation and duff layers
- If you can't burn the site mow it down very short
- Next step is to seed the site, fall dormant seeding (After Nov. 1st) works best

Otherwise,

- Seed site as early as possible in the spring

Seeding Info: For Interseeding you can broadcast the seed but you will want to use 1 ½ times the normal amount of seed. It works best for Interseeding to drill the seed in however. Even planting into existing sod, it is not necessary to use a no-till drill; you just need to use a drill that can plant native fluffy seed. It is important to plant early successional species along with a mix of mid to late successional species. And try to have a mix of species that flower in the spring, summer, and fall to provide good pollinator forage.

- 1st summer after planting, mow 1 to 2 times (depending on site conditions)
 - Set mower at 10" to 12" high
 - May need to spot mow a second time in areas
- 2nd summer after planting, mow 1 to 2 times (depending on site conditions)
 - Set mower at 10" to 12" high
 - May need to spot mow a second time in areas

Additional Info:

Clean your equipment off; experiment with disturbances:

It is important to clean your equipment off before and after you enter the area where you are going to interseed, this helps prevent the spread of undesirable species. When applying disturbances to your site, to promote forb growth; don't be afraid of experimenting on portions of the land using different practices. By experimenting I mean using: fire, grazing, haying, mowing, mowing at different times of the year to promote different species to grow etc. Consult your local conservation office on different ways to disturb your grassland.



Western Prairie Fringed Orchid in NW MN (Photo by: Adam Kleinschmidt)

Please consult with your local USDA Service Center for a more in depth look at your site's specific restoration needs and eligibility.

