



NATIVE GRASS PLANTING

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM CREP-CP2

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Oct. 2000



WHAT IS A NATIVE GRASS PLANTING?

The purpose of a native grass planting is to establish a vegetative cover of native grasses that will enhance the landscape. Native grasses were present in Michigan when Europeans arrived. Many of these grasses are associated with native prairies, barrens and savannahs.

Native grass plantings of warm-season species provide excellent winter cover for wildlife. These tall, stiff, upright grasses stand up well to snow and ice. They also put most of their growth on in the heat of the summer unlike the cool-season grasses of your lawn which grow most in the spring and fall.

Native grasses will live a long time after establishment. However, like most long-lived plant species, they generally establish slowly. Therefore, it is very important to establish these grasses properly and to have patience when evaluating the results.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the land must be within the approved watershed, have a cropping history (two out of the last five years), must have an Erodibility Index (EI) of 8 or greater for wind and/or water erosion, and be within 1000 feet of permanent water such as a lake, stream or river.

PLANTING

It is very important to plant warm season grasses into a weed-free, firm seedbed.

Begin weed control efforts the summer before the planned spring planting. Use an herbicide or tillage to eliminate competing vegetation. If necessary for erosion control, seed a temporary cover of oats in late August. Oats will die with freezing temperatures. Again, eliminate competing vegetation at planting time with tillage or herbicides.

Plant during the period of April 15th to June 15th. Use a no-till or conventional drill that is able to handle the *fluffy* grass seeds. Most warm-season grasses are *fluffy*. The seeds contain multiple awns or beards that give them a fluffy appearance. These fluffy seeds stick together and do not easily flow in a grain drill. Many times a special planter is required. It is also possible to purchase “debearded” seed that is no longer fluffy. Apply lime and fertilizer according to needs determined by a soil test.

Warm-season grasses prefer a firm seedbed to ensure good soil to seed contact. That is one reason why some of the best results have been with no-till methods. Plant the seed at a depth of 1/8 inch in the soil.

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to the surrounding land.

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant a diversity of grasses and wildflowers. This mixture will provide insect production for young birds to feed on while providing flowers for pollinating insects.

Plant a mixture of introduced grasses and legumes, CREP-CP1, to provide brood rearing habitat. A minimum of 30 percent of the area must be planted to the CP1 practice. Plant the introduced grasses in blocks or wide strips with irregular boundaries to provide the best habitat.

If the field contains areas that were wetlands in the past, consider restoring these areas to a wetland using the “CREP-CP23 Wetland Restoration” practice. To develop shallow water areas for wildlife, consider installing the “CREP-CP9 Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife” practice.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

These plantings may not be used for pasture or hay production.

Since warm-season grasses are slow starters, it is important to control unwanted vegetation, especially the first year. Use mowing or herbicides as needed the first summer to control unwanted vegetation. Potential herbicides include 2-4D for mixtures without wildflowers. For mixtures with wildflowers, consider Plateau (not on switchgrass) or Pursuit. For additional information on herbicide controls, see Conservation Management Sheet "Establishing Prairie Grass Buffer Strips." Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.

After the first year, use mowing or burning to manage the stand according to your CREP conservation plan. The field can only be mowed or burned to maintain stand health, maintain stand diversity or control noxious weeds. Burning must be in accordance with a prescribed burn plan. See the Conservation Information Sheet "Prescribed Burning" for further information. No more than one-third of the field can be disturbed in any year. A system of mowing or burning the field in alternating strips or blocks is best for wildlife. This ensures that a portion of the field has undisturbed vegetation and provides additional vegetation diversity to the field. Mow or burn before April 1 or between Aug 1st and Aug 20th.

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NATIVE GRASS PLANTINGS DESIGN WORKSHEET CP-2

Participant: _____ Field: _____ Tract: _____ Date: _____

Requirements

Before planting:

_____ Lime according to soil test
 _____ Fertilize according to soil test (1 year after planting)
 _____ Weed – free seedbed

_____ Plant April 15th to June 15th
 _____ Firm Seedbed
 _____ Plant 1/8 inch deep

Seeding mixture#1: (lbs. per acre PLS) Upland Soils

Big blue stem @ 2 lbs.\acre (pls)
 Indiangrass @ 2 lbs.\acre (pls)
 Little blue stem @ 2 lb.\acre (pls)
 Upland Wildflower mixture @ 0.5lb.\acre

Seeding mixture #2: (lbs. per acre PLS) Wet Soils

Big blue stem @ 2 lb.\acre (pls)
 Switchgrass @ 2lbs.\acre (pls)
 Little blue stem @ 1 lbs\acre (pls)
 Lowland Wildflower mixture @ 0.5lb.\acre

Or Other mixture:

Considerations:

_____ Mow or herbicide first year as needed
 _____ Food plots
 _____ Restore wetlands
 _____ Plant blocks or strips of CREP-CP1
 _____ Impacts on Threatened and Endangered Species

Acres to be seeded:

Mixture #1 _____
 Mixture #2 _____

Maintenance

_____ Mow or burn the area to maintain the health of the stand, improve diversity or control noxious weeds.
 _____ No more than one-third of the field can be mowed or burned in any year.
 _____ Other: _____