

Non-native and turf grasses can be highly competitive against native plants, often outcompeting them for vital resources like water, sunlight, and nutrients. Unlike native species, these grasses tend to grow densely, forming thick mats that can smother native seedlings and prevent their establishment. They can also alter soil composition and disrupt the natural habitat, making it less suitable for local flora and fauna, including pollinators. To create a thriving ecosystem for native plants, it's essential to remove non-native grasses, allowing space and resources for native species to grow. This promotes biodiversity, supports local wildlife, and helps maintain a balanced environment.

Native bees, especially ground-nesting species, need bare soil for nesting. Over 70% of native bee species in North America nest in the ground, digging small burrows to lay their eggs. Bare, undisturbed soil provides the perfect environment for these bees to create their nests. In contrast, dense grass and turf create a thick mat that blocks access to the soil, preventing bees from digging and nesting. Grass also retains moisture and encourages the growth of fungi and bacteria that can be harmful to bees. By keeping some areas of your garden free of grass and mulch, you support native bee populations.

Did you know?

Native bees need native plants because they provide the right type of pollen and nectar that bees have evolved to consume. Native plants bloom in sync with the life cycles of local bees, supporting them when they are most active. This relationship helps maintain healthy bee populations and local ecosystems.



Education

Advocacy

Habitat

Vancouver Bee Project is a community-supported 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Thank you for planting native pollinator plants!

www.vancouverbeeproject.org
info@vancouverbeeproject.org

Get Rid of the Grass Guide



Compiled by



VANCOUVER BEE PROJECT

Planting Wildflowers

Fall is the best time of year to plant native wildflower seeds. Begin by selecting a site with well-draining soil that receives at least six hours of sunlight per day. Once you have your location, clear the area of existing vegetation, such as grass or invasive plants. This step is crucial to give your wildflowers a healthy start by eliminating competition for nutrients and space. Appropriate meadow preparation means attacking and killing weeds and weed seed stock that already exists in the ground. This step can take 12-18 months for adequate preparation. For more details check out the Meadow Prep QR code for methods.

Once the site has been adequately prepared, prepare the soil surface by loosening it to a depth of approximately 1 inch. You can use a rake or a garden tiller, but avoid turning the soil too deeply, which can bring weed seeds to the surface. Native wildflower seeds are small and need good soil contact to germinate. Bulk up the seed mix by adding 1-2 times sand or soil to the seed mix. This step helps you see where the seeds are landing and prevents overcrowding in any one spot. Scatter the seeds evenly over the prepared area, aiming for a density of about 20-30 seeds per square foot. Lightly tamp the seeds into the soil with your hands or a piece of cardboard, but do not cover them with more soil, as they need sunlight to sprout.

Water the seeded area gently but thoroughly, ensuring the soil is consistently moist until germination occurs. Avoid overwatering, which can wash seeds away. With patience, your native wildflower meadow will begin to bloom, providing a haven for local bees and other pollinators.

Grass Removal Methods

Smothering or Solarization: This is the method we have found works best in Clark County and is the method we most recommend you use. Smothering involves covering the soil with an opaque plastic sheet or tarp to smother the site for a minimum of 12 months. That means for a meadow you want to plant next year you'll want to start this process this fall. Solarization involves covering the soil with clear plastic for a year to promote weed seed germination. The resulting heat generated by the clear plastic kills weeds and seeds.

Mechanical Removal: Dig up or till the existing vegetation. This can be labor-intensive but effective for smaller areas. This alone will not kill the weed seed in the soil and you'll still need to do something like smothering or sheet mulching to fully prepare the site.



Example of smothering on a difficult to manage slope area.



Example of a space that has been sheet mulched and planted with native shrubs.

Tilling: Remove the existing vegetation by tilling on a schedule over the course of 7 or 8 months starting in March or April. It works easier if you remove the surface vegetation first. You then till every month or so through the summer to kill newly germinated weeds. This method has some success but doesn't always work very well.

Chemical Spraying: We don't recommend this method but for very large sites (>1 acre) it might be the only option. Similar to tilling you'll need to create a spray regimen to attack newly germinated plants every 4-6 weeks through the spring and summer to kill newly germinated weeds. DO NOT USE a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent weed seed germination as this will persist in the soil and prevent native wildflower seeds from germinating.

Sheet Mulching: Cover the area with cardboard or layers of newspaper, then add a thick layer of mulch. Leave it in place for several months to smother existing plants. This method works best if you're planning on planting pollinator plants that are already germinated. Native wildflower seeds planted directly on mulch will not germinate and you will need to either remove the mulch prior to planting or plant through the mulch with plants.



Meadow Prep



Plant Care

