
A Time to Sow

Activity Overview

A group of students, teachers, parents and community members will plant the restoration and dance in the seeds.

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand how seeds are planted
- Experience a sense of pride, ownership and completion in an important and complicated task

Subjects Covered: Language Arts and Physical Education

Grades: K through 12

Activity Time: 30 minutes

Season: Spring or Fall, when the restoration is planted

Materials: Seed mix, well-marked and prepared site, enthusiastic participants

State Standards

Language Arts:

Listen & comprehend oral communications (C.4.2, C.8.2, C.12.2)

Background

One of the beauties of hand-sowing a prairie restoration site is the potential for many students, teachers, parents, and community members to become involved. As few as one and as many as 500 people can participate in the actual panting—possibly even more, depending on the size of the site. If involving many people, the planting can be done in one large group or in several small groups. In either case, make sure the boundaries of the group's planting area are well-marked and clearly understood. Regardless of group size, we recommend organizing the sowing of seed in the way described below. While sowing needs to be done carefully and everyone needs to clearly understand what to do, this can be a joyous and fun celebration.

Activity Description

It is important that all areas end up covered with seed and that no areas get dumped with too much seed. All of the “sowers” should line up along one edge or side of the planting area. Spread out the line so you are evenly spaced and the line stretches from one end to the other. If your planting is an irregular shape, you will have to spread out so that each person will be covering approximately the same area.

Each sower gets a container or cup. One person, the “seed distributor,” should take half of the total seed mix for that area and walk down the line allowing each sower to take a small, equivalent portion (perhaps one or one-half cupful or one handful). If there is seed left, the seed distributor goes down the line again letting each person take another equal portion. The idea is to have each sower plant the same amount of seed. When everyone is ready, walk across the planting, spreading your seed as you go. Plant up to where your neighbor is planting so no areas get missed. Try to make your quantity of seed last until you get to the far edge. If you have seed left over, turn around and walk back, planting the rest of the seed.

After all of that seed has been planted, line up as you did before, but this time along an adjacent side of the planting. This time your planting paths will cross at right angles to the paths you planted before. Divide up the second half of the seed among all sowers and plant as before.

After sowing the seeds, it is important to make sure that the seeds have good contact with the soil. The seeds can be raked in (which is a lot of work) or danced in (which is a lot of fun). This is an essential step to get the seeds ready to germinate. Dance all you want, but make sure that all areas are danced in. Bring music or create your own.

Extensions

- Write a song for dancing the seed into the soil.
- Create invitations to invite community members, school officials, parents, etc. to join in the sowing.

A Time to Sow (cont.)

- Monitor the planting to look for emerging seedlings.

Additional Resources

- Packard, S., Mutel, C. (1997). *The tallgrass restoration handbook: For prairies, savannas, and woodlands*. Island Press. Washington, D.C.
- Shirley, S. (1994). *Restoring the tallgrass prairie: An illustrated manual for Iowa and the Upper Midwest*. University of Iowa Press. Iowa City, IA.
- Smith, J.R., Smith, B. (1980). *The prairie garden: 70 native plants you can grow in town or country*. The University of Wisconsin Press. Madison, WI.

Assessments

- Actively participate in sowing.
- Describe the horticultural and scientific processes involved in sowing seed to maximize seed germination.
- Write a paragraph about your experience sowing seed and how it relates to practicing land stewardship.