

SOWING SEED IN SMALL AREAS

Late Spring Planting – May or June

If you plant seeds in spring, moist stratify first. (See “How to Start Wildflowers from Seed” elsewhere in this guidebook.)

Seeds can be sprinkled by hand over a small tilled area. Follow a design plan, arranging seed by species. Remember, flowers appear in random drifts on the prairie – rather than being evenly sprinkled.

“You may also “spot” seed. Cover a pinch of seed with 1/8 - 1/4 inch of soil, then firm it down. Space grasses 12-15 inches apart and place flowers between grasses according to your plan.

Mixing seed with light-colored sand or fine vermiculite helps show what has been covered and helps extend small amounts of seed. Try for a covering of 4-5 seeds per square foot.

After sowing, cover seeds by lightly raking and then firming the soil. Also label your blocks of seed.

Irrigation of a seed-sown area is desirable for a few weeks. Seeds which have been moist-stratified should not be allowed to dry out. When seedlings have their first true (second) leaves, irrigation can be reduced, but not eliminated.

Late Fall Planting – November thru February

Similar results can be achieved by sowing seeds on a prepared site November thru February. Rake bare earth with a tine – not a leaf – rake and then scatter your seeds by the handful and rake in again. Good soil to seed contact is necessary. The frost-heaving that occurs in this area will mix your seeds into the earth at an appropriate depth.

As a side note, some seeds can take 2 years to germinate (Dutchman’s breeches, for example). Others require light to germinate (columbine, for example). So seeds should not be buried. A few will take a long time before becoming a flowering plant (7 years, for example, for shooting star). Try to be patient and research the germination requirements for your particular seed type.

This worksheet provided by the Greater DuPage Chapter.