

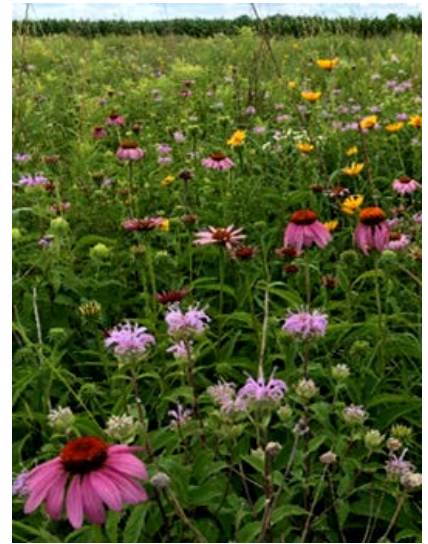
Pollinator Habitat

“How To Make Your Project a Success”

By Catie Gregg, Ford County SWCD RC

This year landowners and producers enrolled several thousand acres of new CRP pollinator habitat projects. These native grasses and wildflowers will provide valuable habitat for not only our monarch and bee friends, but also for pheasants, turkeys, and deer that hunters and wildlife enthusiasts like to see.

In the first year these new plantings can get weedy. This is normal. Just like the children’s story about the Ugly Duckling, pollinator plantings need time to grow into beautiful fields of wildflowers. While it may appear that quick growing weeds are taking over, native grasses and wildflowers are hard at work putting all of their energy into

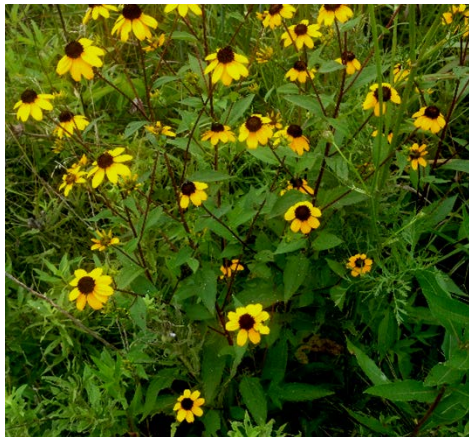


Pollinator Plantings in Ford County after 1 year (left) and 10 years (right).

developing deep root systems. This will allow them to crowd out the weeds the following year. Look for Partridge Pea and Black-eyed Susan in the first year after planting. These are two of the quickest natives to establish themselves and will let you know that the seeding was successful. Many of the other wildflower species won’t show up until the next year because they need to over-winter before they will germinate. This is why doing a frost seeding can give your plants a head start and get your pollinator project more quickly established. If you need to plant in the spring, seeding them with a nurse crop, like

oats, can limit the amount of weeds seen early on.

In the first year of establishment, mowing high before the weeds seed-out can limit the amount of weed seeds released. However, mowing also knocks back the natives you are trying to establish and disturbs the ground. The need for mowing should be determined on a case by case basis. Check with a Pheasant Forever Biologist or your local USDA office before mowing to determine if it would help your seeding. After the first year, never mow during the nesting season (April 15 - Aug 1). In the end, the key to management of pollinator plantings is patience... the native prairie species will out compete the weeds soon!



Species to look for in the first year– Partridge Pea (left), Black-eyed Susan (right).