

# WILDFLOWER PLANTING GUIDE

As with every venture in life, the more planning involved in a project the more success one can expect. Most of the wildflowers that grow in Texas, grow in areas that are called upland sites. These sites are usually shallow soils with good water runoff. Trying to grow wildflowers in deep bottom land soils with excess moisture is tricky at best. There are a few wildflowers that like moist bottom land soils such as plains coreopsis, smartweed and clasping coneflower. Before planting wildflowers in a certain site, check out the established vegetation. Weedy grasses like johnsongrass, crabgrass, bermuda grass, grass burs and annual ryegrass can cause problems when planting wildflowers. These grasses can be controlled by chemicals, but there are few if any chemicals for broadleaf weeds so it is best to plant in a “weed free” soil. It is better to plant in full sun than shade and fertilization will produce lush foliage with very few blooms.

## SITE PREPARATION

When planting any seed, fresh disturbed soil is a must and with wildflowers a light disturbance is great. Cultivate less than one inch, because more than an inch will germinate weeds that are dormant in the soil. One of the biggest mistakes people make when planting seeds, is the depth of planting. The old timers had a “rule of thumb” that seven times the diameter of any seed was the maximum seed depth to plant. Farmers still plant thousands of acres too deep each year. The largest wildflower seed (Texas bluebonnet) can be surfaced sown on fresh disturbed soil and obtain excellent results. It is best to roll or compact all surface sown seed. This will place the seed in direct contact with the disturbed soil in a perfect depth to germinate when the right soil temperature and moisture are present.

## SITE MANAGEMENT

Wildflowers are planted not only for their beauty but for their lack of maintenance. As with most crops, wildflowers won't germinate without moisture, but the seed will remain dormant until conditions are favorable. This is the reason that wildflower populations vary from year to year. During these dry periods, it is good to idea to add moisture during germination periods. This is usually when the soil temperature is in the 60-80 degree range. This can be in the fall for bluebonnets and paintbrush or in the spring for others. After germination, keep the site as weed free as possible since it will probably be used year after year. Mow plants at least 4 inches high when they are finished growing and completely dry, this will help scatter the seeds and protect the perennial plants.