

CONVERT THE TURF

Urban Prairie Strips



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Turf grass requires frequent mowing and fertilization. It also has shallow roots and is often irrigated in urban yards. Soils underneath the turf grass may be compacted, generating more runoff into the streets.

Native plants and grasses have deep root systems, creating open space in the soil below, allowing rainfall to percolate deep into the ground. Natives are adapted to Iowa's climate and tolerant of weather extremes.

Urban Prairie Strips are strips of native plants placed downslope in a yard. They capture rainfall runoff from turf grass and downspouts, enhancing the landscape's ability to infiltrate and soak up stormwater.

They create diverse habitats that attract pollinators, such as butterflies and bees. Most importantly, once established, they do not require fertilizer, pesticides, and supplemental water to survive.

After establishment, native landscaping may be less expensive to maintain than mowed turf grass areas. Maintenance consists of removing weeds and dead vegetation in the spring.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Convert a section of your lawn to native flowers and grasses! It's a DIY project that does not require special skills or knowledge. The next page has steps on how to plant an urban prairie strip in your yard.

Looking for more resources?

Visit

www.iowastormwater.org for a native species plant list and a list of native seed and plant suppliers. There are also resources on our website with information on what cost share programs you can use in your city or county.

Installing URBAN PRAIRIE STRIPS

1. Location



Identify a downslope area in your yard. Make sure downspouts and lawn drain toward the area. Take note of how much sun the area gets. This is important for plant selection.

2. Utilities



Once you identify an area in your lawn for the prairie strip, contact Iowa One Call (811) to have underground utilities marked out before you dig!

3. Site Prep



Now it's time to prepare the area for your native prairie strip. Set your lawn mower at the lowest setting to scalp the area and remove as much turf as possible.

4. Remove Turf



Kill remaining turf by:

- 1) Using weighted cardboard or tarps
- 2) Applying an herbicide, several applications may be necessary.

5. Till and Edging



Till the area. Add edging if desired. Leave a mowed grass border.

6. Plant or Seed



Mulch the area. Plant with plugs or larger potted plants. Seed can also be used but a mulch alternative is needed. Select plant species suitable to sunlight and soil drainage conditions.

7. Maintain and Enjoy



Maintain a mowed border. Weed during the growing season. Prune back dead vegetation in the spring.

