Magical Meadows
Transforming Lawns to Meadows.

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Mission + Residential Program

Conserving the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Nanticoke River watershed.

Residential Plantings for People and Pollinators Program
- Pollinator gardens
- Designer ditches
- Meadows
- Tree plantings and understory shrub plantings
- Rain barrels
Why a Meadow?

- Cheaper and easier (after year one) to maintain than a lawn, fewer emissions, more biodiversity, much greater nitrogen and carbon storage
- Living classroom
- Four-season entertainment
- Support specific bees, butterflies and moths, and/or birds with your mix
Meadow Considerations

- Has the area been mowed regularly or have weeds and grasses been allowed to go to seed?
- Are there invasive plants in the project site area?
- Is the soil boggy or well-draining?
- How large is the area? Is it reasonable for me to prep and maintain the meadow size, or will I be overwhelmed?
- Do I have philosophical differences with any of the site prep techniques?
- How much time do I have to prep? Am I planning an autumn or spring sowing?
**Site Prep**

Larger areas
1. Triple-trill
2. Spray and lightly cultivate

Smaller areas
3. Solarize
4. Remove lawn with a sod cutter
5. Use hand tools to remove turf

Site prep will determine the success or failure of your project.
Plugs Or Seeds?

Plugs
- More expensive
- Instant gratification
- More effort to plant
- Can include nativars

Seeds
- Cheaper
- Can purchase curated mixes
- Easier to sow
- Need more patience

Retail
Izel Plants - .izelplants.com
Environmental Concern - seasonal retail opportunities with limited plug availability
Partner with an organization (like NWA) who can purchase at wholesale

Ernst Conservation Seeds
ernstseed.com
(ecotypes + mix and seed selection)
Prairie Moon
prairiemoon.com
(features shady mixes)
Pinelands Nursery
.pinelandsnursery.com
(ecotypes)
Choosing (Or Making) Your Meadow Mix

- Soil condition (dry, moist, wet)
- Light (full sun, part sun, shade)
- Instant gratification with non-native annuals included or native-only mix?
- How important is ecotype (local seeds or plants) to you?
- Are there must-have plants that aren’t included in any of the mixes?
- Do you want to build an ultra-niche meadow mix (e.g., specialist bee mix)?
- Always include native grasses!
- Don’t forget your cover crop
Sowing Your Meadow

Hand-sow or use a spreader

- Mix cover with wildflower seeds or sow separately
- Can add sand or kitty litter (and small amounts of water) to help bind smaller seeds and get an even spread
- Divide mix into at least two parts to ensure you have adequate seeding (for up-and-down and side-to-side passes)
- Stomp on, use a roller or even a small tractor, or rake in seed

Lightly scatter EZ Straw on the sowed area

Credit: UNH
First-year Maintenance

Mow meadow 3-4 times (cut to height of 6-8”)
watch out for invasives and remove them!

If you seeded, you MUST be willing to mow 3-4 times the first year. Yes, you will cut off flower heads but you will be providing optimal conditions for native plants to grow.
Maintenance Beyond Year One

- Continue to watch for and remove any and all invasive plants
- Mow once per year, preferably in spring (April)
  - There is no perfect time to mow, but you need to mow before there is too much new growth. Insects emerge at different temperatures and in different seasons.
  - Allowing seeds to stand overwinter provides food and habitat for birds, small mammals, and insects.
- OPTIONAL: (Year Four and beyond): If you are willing to stay on top of invasive plants, you may mow one-third of your meadow each year, rotating the cut section so that 100% of your meadow is mowed every three years.
  - This gives non-early spring insects a chance to emerge.
Resources

Owen Wormser: Lawns into Meadows: Growing a Regenerative Landscape

Heather Holm: Bees: An Identification and Native Plant Forage Guide
Wasps: A Guide for Eastern North America
Pollinators of Native Plants

SUNY-ESF: Converting Lawns to Meadows Pocket Guide:
www.esf.edu/research/restorationscience/documents/landowner-manual.pdf (Geared toward Central NYS residents but still has a lot of good info that still applies on Delmarva.).