SITE PREPARATION

These sites generally involve working around trees and shrubs while minimizing damage to trunks and roots. Undesirable vegetation must be controlled by tilling or direct spraying with glyphosate. Invasive weeds not addressed before establishment will be difficult to remove later. The soil needs to be loosened in order to establish seed-to-soil contact and dense leaf litter should be broken up. This can be accomplished with a rototiller. Seedlings can emerge from light leaf litter if planted at the proper depth. Light mulch or hydromulch can protect the seeds and soil until germination. Seeding and mulching around bioengineering material should occur immediately after installation. If installation cannot occur immediately after grading, temporary seeding and mulching are recommended.

HABITAT: Typically in moderate shade; many native species are adapted to moderate shade and the protective habitat around trees; shade tolerant native grass species, such as Agrostis perennans (Autumn Bentgrass), Chasmanthium laxum (Slender Woodoats), Cinna arundinacea (Wood Reedgrass), Elymus hystrix (Bottlebrush Grass), Elymus riparius (Riverbank Wildrye), Elymus virginicus (Virginia Wildrye) and Panicum clandestinum (Deertongue), provide early protection for the emerging herbaceous species.

FERTILITY: The addition of organic matter (compost) is most important. Check your soil pH and select species adapted to that pH.

SEEDING METHOD: Hand seed, broadcast seed or hydrosed. Use a garden rake, drag or roll the surface to incorporate the seed into the soil 1/4”-1/2” deep. A seed drill can be used when sufficient room exists for operation.
FIRST GROWING SEASON MAINTENANCE

Whenever canopy (overall vegetation) reaches a height of 18”-24”, use a brush hog mower or string trimmer to trim the meadow to a height of 8” (Note: A lawn mower is not recommended as the mower height will be too low and native seedlings will be killed). This will reduce competition by fast-growing weeds for sunlight, water and nutrients needed by slow-growing perennial natives. If bioengineering materials are used on the site, mowing should be above the new growth of these materials. Mowing should cease by mid-September.

Problem weeds should be hand pulled or spot sprayed with an approved herbicide (such as Roundup®).

SECOND & SUBSEQUENT GROWING SEASON MAINTENANCE

Prior to new spring growth reaching a height of 2” (i.e., shortly after forsythia or redbud blooms), trim any material standing from the previous year close to the ground (approximately 2”). This will allow the soil to warm more quickly which will stimulate the emergence and growth of herbaceous native plants, as well as help reduce woody undergrowth invasion. In certain ecosystems, controlled burning by certified professionals can achieve the same results.

If bioengineering materials were used on the site or seed of shrubs/trees were part of the mix, the site should not be trimmed after the establishment year.

Problem weeds should be hand pulled or spot sprayed.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES - SECOND GROWING SEASON

If you notice a heavy infestation of ragweed or foxtail in the second growing season, trim the meadow to a height of 8”. Trimming should cease by mid-September.

The following mixes provide food and/or cover for wildlife as well as stabilization of soils in partially shaded areas:

- ERNMX-132 - Right-of-Way Woods Mix
- ERNMX-132-1 - Native Right-of-Way Woods Mix with Annual Ryegrass
- ERNMX-140 - Partially Shaded Area Roadside Mix

Mix formulations are subject to change without notice depending on the availability of existing and new products. While the formula may change, the guiding philosophy and function of the mix will not. Ernst Conservation Seeds has developed hundreds of mixes for these types of projects. For additional mixes, including state-specific mixes, please visit www.ernstseed.com.

DISCLAIMER: The information in this review of practices is the result of more than 50 years of experience in seed production. Ernst Conservation Seeds has been supplying seeds and consulting in the reseeding of tens of thousands of acres of roadsides, surfacemined lands, conservation and restoration sites in eastern North America, as well as growing and supplying seed and consulting in the planting of hundreds of thousands of acres of CRP/CREP-related areas for erosion control and wildlife habitat. All of these practices are opinion only and our best advice as a result of these experiences. These recommendations do not cover all of the conditions that will be encountered in the field. All of the information is for individual consideration. Ernst Conservation Seeds is not responsible for conditions that will be encountered in individual situations. The use of brand names does not represent our endorsement of a specific product; rather, it represents our experience only and has not necessarily been replicated in peer-reviewed research. The use of chemical pest control agents is subject to manufacturers’ instructions and labeling, as well as federal, state and local regulations.