

What's in your Operation Pollinator seed mix?

Alsike clover



A perennial featuring pink and white flowers that appear similar to white clover. This flower provides abundant nectar and pollen and is attractive to a variety of bee species. Honey bees, bumble bees, and solitary bees are known to visit alsike clover for its nectar and pollen.

Birdsfoot trefoil



A perennial with vibrant yellow flowers. Honey bees and bumble bees are the most common foragers on birdsfoot trefoil. Birdsfoot trefoil requires well-drained soils to thrive. It can be slow to establish, so controlling weed pressure through the introduction of a grass species, such as timothy, can be beneficial to fill in the seedbed instead of alternative weeds.

Common Milkweed



A perennial with green, white to pink-purple flowers, well known as the larval host for monarch butterflies. Milkweed is also attractive to a variety of beneficial insects including bees and other butterflies. (Optional in mix)

Groundbreaker Radish



A fast-growing biennial with white and purple flowers that are attractive to pollinators. This deep-rooted Brassica helps in reducing compaction, building organic matter, improving nutrient recycling and with the suppression of weeds.

Phacelia



An annual that features purple-blue flowers. It is well-known for being attractive to bees and provides both nectar and pollen. Phacelia blooms for a lengthy period during the summer, providing abundant forage. The pollen of phacelia is an excellent source of protein, which can benefit developing bee larvae.

Red clover



This perennial is particularly attractive to bumblebees due to its nectar quality. By incorporating timely mowing, red clover can bloom multiple times throughout the season, supporting bumble bee colonies as they grow and develop.

Sunflower



A fast growing annual with bright yellow blooms. The large flowers act as a beacon, attracting important pollinating insects including honey bees, butterflies and other wild bees. The sunflower also provides habitat and forage for other beneficial insects.

Timothy



A fast-growing grass that provides quick ground cover to discourage weed establishment, while slower-growing plants, such as legumes, establish. Timothy also creates shelter and habitat for other beneficial insects, including predatory ground beetles, and ladybird beetles.

Yellow & white sweet clover



Attractive to a variety of bees. Mowing sweet clover after flowering has ended encourages re-growth, providing additional forage for pollinators later in the season.

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Legumes, including birdsfoot trefoil, red clover, alsike clover, and sweet clover, require rhizobium bacteria for inoculation. This seed mix has been pre-inoculated.

All of these plants (except timothy) are known to bloom for lengthy periods, and the perennials will continue to bloom throughout the season with good management practices.



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Pollinator seed mix blooming timeline



Establishing an Operation Pollinator site

Site preparation:

- Mow the area. If vegetative residues are excessive, they should be removed
- Control weeds with a burn-down herbicide (with no residual soil activity).
- Some light tillage may be necessary to ensure an adequate seedbed and that the seed is in direct contact with the soil.

Seeding:

- Seed the mix either with a broadcast spreader or drill (depth of 1/8" - 1/4")
- Seeding rate for this seed mix is 22 lb/ac (25 kg/ha).
- If broadcasting, set to half seeding rate 11 lb/ac (12.5 kg/ha) and decrease spreading width to half of normal to ensure good coverage.
- Sunflower seeds may be hand seeded if too large for equipment.

Site maintenance:

- Irrigation may be beneficial but is not a requirement.
- Fertilization is not required.
- If possible, mow the perennial plants (such as red clover and alsike clover) after flowering has finished to encourage re-growth and re-flowering.
- If mowing is not possible, consider multiple plantings staggered throughout the season to ensure a constant supply of flowers for pollinators.
- Mowing one-to-two months after planting will help reduce weed competition.

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