



Lawn to Meadow

The Ups and Downs of a First Time Meadow Creation

Agenda

- 1 Planning and Site Prep
- 2 Planting
- 3 Project Costs
- 4 What I've Learned
- 5 Approached You Can Take



Pandemic 2020 Project

- Great way to quarantine
 - Design planning in winter 2019-2020
 - Sidewalk install April – May
 - Manually removed all turf grass
 - Scalping with flat shovel
 - Rototilled site and removed remaining roots

Area		Name															
Front Lawn	comment	Common	Latin	Spacing	Height	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		Nodding Pink Onion	Allium cernuum	10"	1'-2'							X	X				
		Common Bluestar	Amsonia tabernaemontana	12"-18"	2'-3'					X							
		Butterflyweed	Asclepias tuberosa	12"	2'-3'						X	X	X				
		Common Milkweeds	Asclepias syriaca	12"	2'-4'						X	X	X				
		New England Aster	Aster novae-angliae	12"	3'-6'									X	X		
rarely native		Blue False Indigo	Baptisia australis	24"	3'-5'						X	X					
needs more moisture in full sun		Mistflower	Conoclinium coelestinum	12"	1'-3'						X	X	X	X	X		
		lanceleaf coreopsis	Coreopsis lanceolata	18"-24"	1'-2.5'			X	X	X							
		Purple Coneyflower	Echinacea purpurea	12"	3'-4'							X	X	X			
		Sweet Joe Pye	Eupatorium maculatum	18"	4'-6'								X	X			
requires moist rich soil		Boneset	Eupatorium perfoliatum	18"	3'-4'								X	X			
		Ox Eye Sunflower	Heliopsis helianthoides	24"	3'-6'						X	X	X	X			
requires moisture		Rough Blazingstar	Liatris aspera	6"-12"	3'-5'								X	X			
more tolerant than red beebalm		Bergamot	Monarda fistulosa	12"	2'-5'						X	X	X				
		Moss Phlox	Phlox stolonifera	12"	.5'			X	X								
		Short-Toothed Mountain Min	Pycnanthemum muticum	18"	2'-3'							X	X	X			
		Brown Eyed Susan	Rudbeckia triloba	12"	2'-5'							X	X	X	X		
		Zigzag Goldenrod	Solidago flexicaulis	12"	2'-4'								X	X			
needs moisture		Culvers Root	Veronicastrum virginicum	24"	3'-6'							X	X				
		New York Ironweed	Vernonia noveboracensis	12"	3'-6'							X	X	X	X		



Planting Planner

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Key Information Sources:

- Prairie Nursery, prairienursery.com
- North Creek Nurseries (Wholesale Only), northcreeknurseries.com
- New Moon Nursery (Wholesale Only), newmoonnursery.com

Plants Arrive!

- 1800 plugs for initial installation
 - Northcreek Nursery, Oxford, PA
 - New Moon Nursery, Woodstown, NJ
- Additional resources added later
 - Carolina Native Nursery, Burnsville, NC
 - Izel Native Plants, various



Planting Methods



30-45/hour + BLISTERS



200-250/hour (almost) no blisters

August 2020

3 months after planting

Plugs are Amazing!

I now plant everything as small as possible as I have found small plants establish faster and outpace a larger specimen in the long run



DIY Cost

- \$2000 (2020 actual)
 - \$1,800 in plants (average \$1 each plant)
 - \$250 in mulch (10 yards)
 - 30 hours labor (excludes sidewalk)

2025 Estimated DIY Cost

- \$3600
 - Plugs pricing +75% = \$3150
 - Mulch= \$450 (10 yards delivered)

Estimated Pro Design/Install

- \$6000-\$8000 (estimated)
 - \$4000 for plants and mulch (2X wholesale)
 - \$2000 in pro install and design (40 hours X \$50/hour)
- *I asked a garden designer friend from Charlotte, NC and he estimated \$7000-\$8000 (2020)*

Estimated Pro Design/Install

- \$12,000 = \$18,000
 - 3-4X DIY costs

Was it Worth it? (August 2023)



Routine Care

- Cut back to 6-18" height in late February
 - Cut by hand as it gives me more control and I get to see more
 - Looking for first signs of growth, and weed eat before they get tall enough to be cut
 - Cut the pieces in 6-12 in lengths to make better looking and laying mulch
 - Leave a lot of the debris as mulch but if there is excess it goes to compost
- 1-2 hours of weeding per week throughout growing season
- No Additional Mulching beyond what the plants provide
- I might sneak in new plants every now and then...



**"WHEN WEEDING, THE BEST WAY TO
MAKE SURE YOU ARE REMOVING A WEED
AND NOT A VALUABLE PLANT IS TO PULL
ON IT. IF IT COMES OUT OF THE GROUND
EASILY, IT IS A VALUABLE PLANT."**

~UNKNOWN



Additions since May 2020

- Added Shade Garden to rear of house
- Added grasses as infills and replaced a few plants that failed in front
- Between shade garden and infill planting I've more than doubled the plant count (+4500-5000 plugs)

What I've Learned

- **If You Plant it They Will Come...**
- I'm shocked by how much education it has caused and the interest it has generated!
- You need more plants than anything recommends to create a stable (non-floppy) native garden
 - I planted on 12-inch centers
 - Recommendations varied by plant from 12–24-inch centers
 - This is correct for the flowering plants
 - There should be a grass in every gap between for competition and support
 - Green mulch and competition keeps the plants shorter
- I've come to despise wood mulch (double ground)
 - It's a water barrier after 2-3 months
- There will be challenges
 - Some plants will be perfect for the sight on paper...and not thrive anyway!
 - Some plants are wrong but you must have them...and they love it in their new home!
 - Plants will not stay where you put them...relax and learn what they are trying to teach you!
 - You planted a buffet in a food desert...you will be too successful at some point before you're ready!





Why Plant a Meadow

Why Plant a Meadow

Creating a functional landscape

- **Support diversity of life, not just pollinators**
 - Support the entire lifecycle
- **Provide energy for the local food web.**
- **Reconnect functional ecosystems**
- **Manage the watershed**
 - absorbing and retaining stormwater
 - Slow or stop runoff and erosion
- **Carbon sequestration**



Your ancestors' lawn



Your lawn

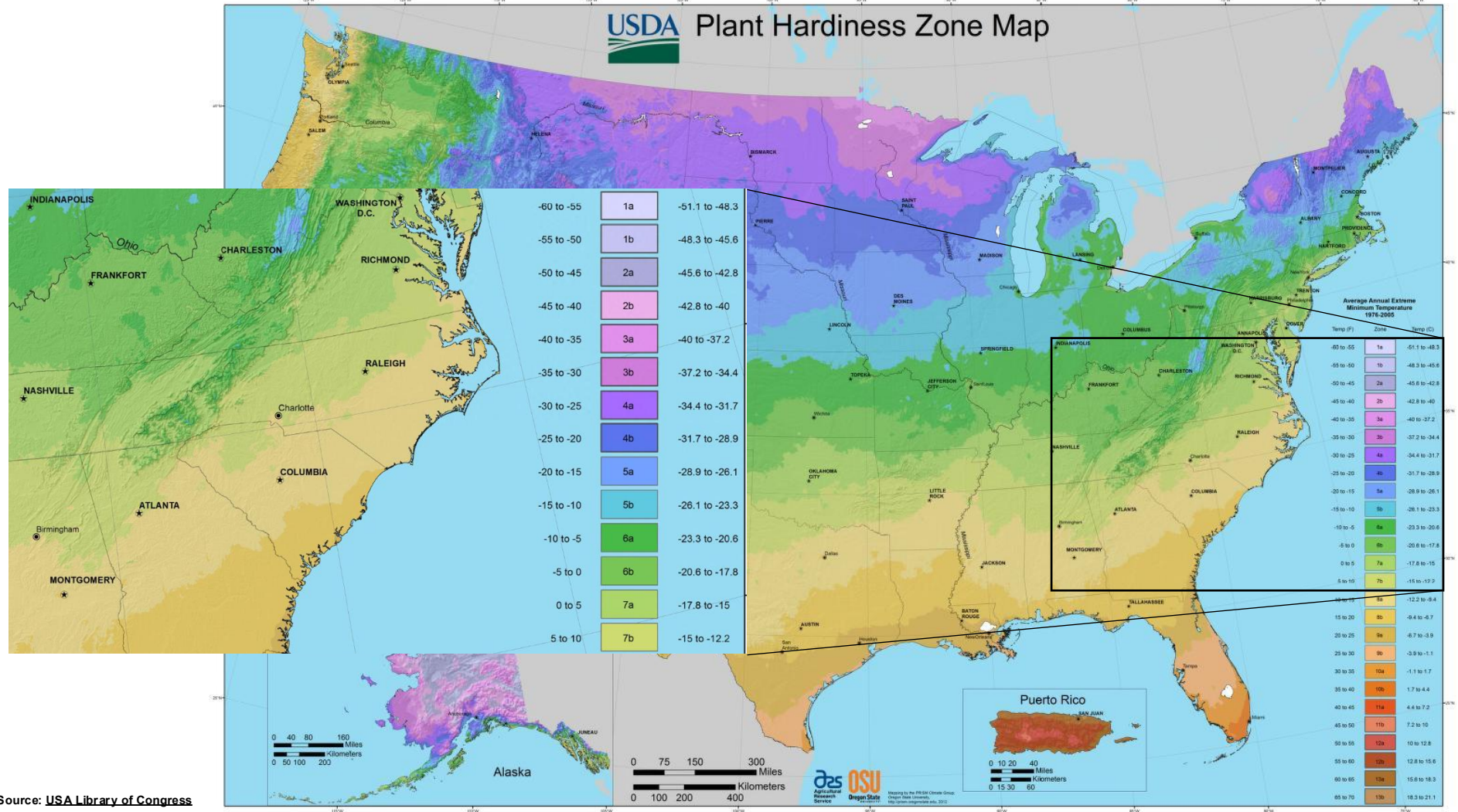


Your descendants' lawn

If you have to poison your lawn with pesticides and herbicides that kill wildlife, eliminate biodiversity and contaminate the ecosystem to "maintain" it....maybe it's not supposed to look like that.



USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

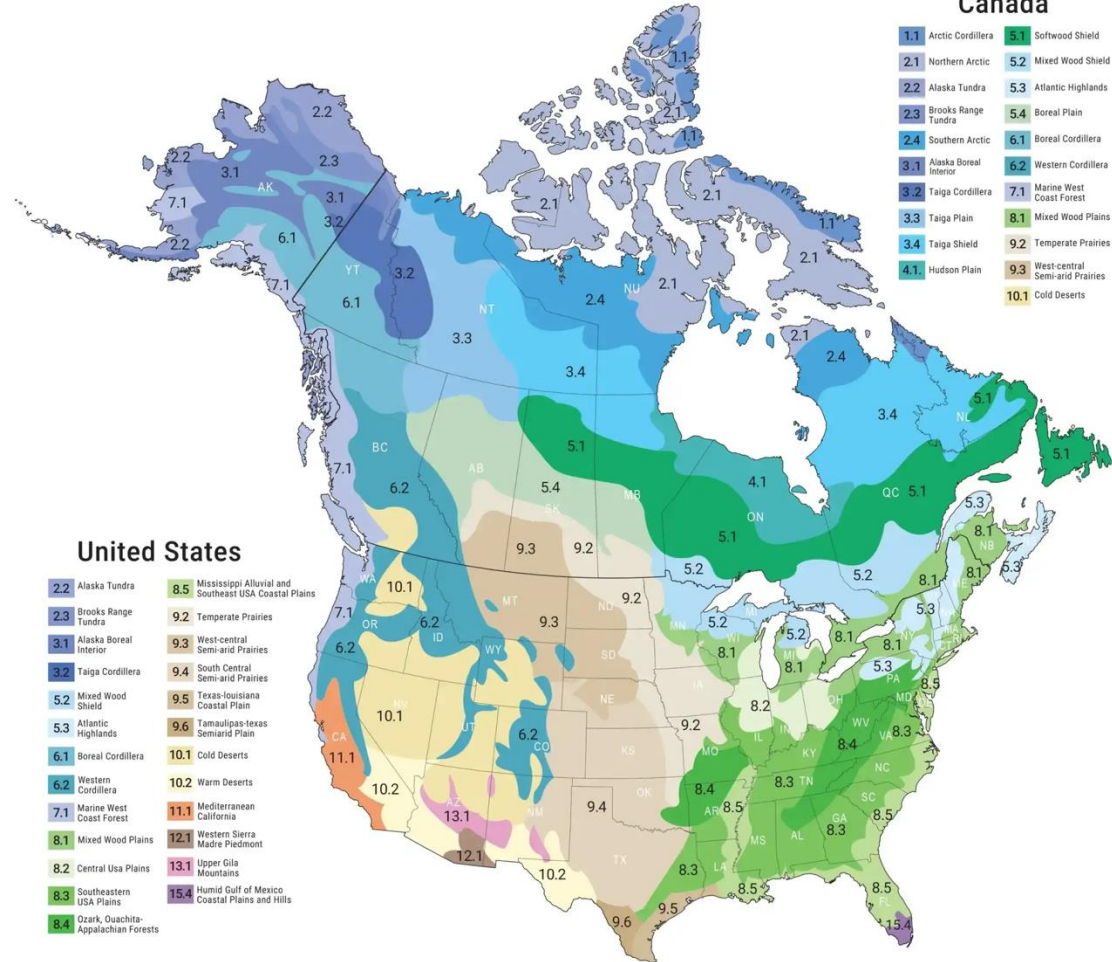


Ecoregions

a geographic area with shared ecological traits. Climate, seasons, topography, soils, and typical plant and animal communities are similar within the region

North American Ecoregions Level II

EPA ECOREGION DATA





How to Plant a Meadow

Kill Your Lawn

- Herbicide
- Cardboard
- Tarp/Plastic
- Sod Cutter





Mature Plants

Quarts and Gallons

- Broad availability
- Instant reward
- Ability to design plant location
- More work to plant
- Highest cost
- Slow to fully establish



Plugs

- Limited availability (but growing)
 - Largely Wholesale, but retail growing
- Generally must buy by the flat
- Fast reward
- Ability to design plant location
- Fairly easy to plant
- mid-range cost
- Fastest to fully establish



Seeding

Premixed and Custom Blends

- Fairly availability
- Lowest cost
- Longest establishment time
- Harder to design plant layout
- Initial “messy” appearance
- Longer risk of invasive/trouble plants

How to Get Started

Homegrown National Park

- *Armchair Wildlife Habitat*
- *Landless Wildlife Habitat*
- *Step-by-step Wildlife Habitat*
- *Gung-ho! Wildlife Habitat*



You Have the Power to Change the Script

