



Pollinator Habitat Best Management Practices

Grasslands and pollinator meadows can offer many benefits to state facilities, including improved habitat for wildlife and a more attractive landscape. The [Pollinator Landscapes at State Facilities Guiding Framework](#) provides an overview of benefits and the basic strategies state facilities are employing to create these habitats; this document outlines some **suggested best practices to create and manage pollinator meadows and grasslands**.

<p>1) Site Preparation</p>	<p>The simplest way to initiate new pollinator habitats is to stop mowing an area or portion of an area. If seeding or planting is desired, preparation will vary by site, but will typically involve removal of existing lawn via tilling, overlaying a tarp over a section of lawn for an extended period, or using approved herbicides through a certified applicator¹. Some sites may require soil amendments or establishing a preferred grade as determined by site staff or consultants.</p>
<p>2) Seed/Plant Selection</p>	<p>Designated habitat areas may be planted with seeds and/or live plants. In both cases, species should be selected that are as regionally native as possible (e.g., native to the county, state, or region). The Pollinator Seed Checklist offers guidance on species selection. If planting live plants, select a diverse mix. Where possible, several plants of the same species should be planted in groups of five or more to better attract native pollinating insects.</p>
<p>3) Planting Timing</p>	<p>The optimal timeframe for sowing seed mixes is typically early spring or late fall.</p>
<p>4) Mulch</p>	<p>Newly planted gardens and seeded meadows may require mulch to retain moisture and protect seeds until vegetation establishes. Leaf mulch or straw mulch should be used for perennials. Seed mixes are typically hydro-mulched.</p>
<p>5) Watering and Weeding</p>	<p>After seeding, meadows do not typically require watering unless conditions are very dry. Mowing may be required for weed control during establishment (first 2-3 years). Areas should be mowed prior to weed species going to seed; see mowing best practices in the following section.</p>
	<p>Once established, perennial plantings don't require watering, but will require weed management during the first 2-3 years until seeded species plants are more densely established. After that, weeding will be minimal, but likely still required. Frequency will depend on weather, surrounding weeds, and other site conditions.</p>
<p>6) Protection and Education</p>	<p>Fencing may be used to prevent foot traffic. Signage can help to convey the intent and importance of the planting. Signage should inform staff and visitors that a naturalized look is expected and why it is beneficial to pollinators and native wildlife. State facilities may adopt or modify "Growing Wild for Pollinators" signs found on the LBE Sustainable Landscaping website.</p>

¹ The MA Department of Agricultural Resources regulates pesticides under the Massachusetts Pesticide Control Act (MPCA, Chapter 132B of the MA General Laws). See the [MDAR Pesticide Program](#) for guidance and additional information.

Pollinator Habitat Best Management Practices for Mowing

The best management practices below are adopted from DCR's "Principles for Long-term Management of Fields and Meadows" outlined in the [BMP for Pollinator Habitats and Gardens](#) and can be applied to limited mow zones, seeded grasslands, and meadows.

Timing and Frequency	Sites are typically mowed once per year, in early spring or late fall, to manage growth of woody plants while avoiding cutting during peak flowering seasons.
Avoiding Wildlife	Mow at low gear and at slow speeds to allow wildlife the chance to react.
Height	Unless there is significant amount of woody vegetation, mow 7-12" above the ground to allow small species to grow.
Edge	Maintain a mown edge for neatness and accessibility, and to suppress encroachment of undesirable species.
Pathways	Where appropriate, mow one or more pathways to allow for public or employee access.
Cleaning	Landscaping equipment should be washed before and after each mowing in the grassland/pollinator meadow to limit spread of invasive, non-native plants.
Plant Litter	Leave cut vegetation to replenish soil nutrients, to create natural mulch, and to provide cover and nesting habitat for wildlife.
Invasive Species	Remove invasive plants or aggressive weeds by hand or manual cutting. Some aggressive plants with deep roots and plants that resprout from cut stems may need to be treated with herbicides. ¹
Naturalization	Species diversity will progressively change as native plants re-seed and root systems spread. Over time, your meadow or garden will evolve into something that may look quite different from when it was first planted; see example from Taunton State Hospital below.

Taunton State Hospital Wildflower Meadow Over Time



[Leading by Example: Sustainable Landscaping](#)

[MDAR: Choosing Pollinator-Friendly Native Plants](#)

[DCR: Growing Wild Massachusetts](#)

