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NATIVE NEWS



RESTORATION OF SEDGE MEADOWS

Many of our highest quality wetlands in the Midwest are sedge meadows. Restoration of this habitat is challenging due to the need for correct soil conditions, precise hydrology, and the conservative nature of many of its dominant plant species.

Soils that support sedge meadows must be moisture retentive and also facilitate excellent lateral movement of water. Most natural sedge meadows occur on organic soils. These soils have formed from thousands of years of accumulated vegetation failing to decompose due to saturated conditions. While restoring a sedge meadow on organic soils is ideal, the saturated conditions must be fully restored as unsaturated muck soils support a lush growth of oversized annual weeds. If saturation is feasible, sedge meadows may also be established on loamy soils or sandy soils with high organic content. Sedge meadow restorations typically perform poorly on tight clay soils that restrict water movement. Such soils tend to rapidly go from inundated to dry and cracked, limiting the duration of the optimal saturated conditions for a sedge meadow.

Some of the dominant sedge species are either difficult to obtain or extremely expensive as seed. However, they spread by rhizomes once established, making plug installation an effective form of establishment. Among these species are Lake Sedge (*Carex lacustris*), Tussock Sedge (*Carex stricta*), Riverbank Tussock Sedge (*Carex emoryi*) and Woolly Sedge (*Carex pellita*). Installation of plugs of these species on 3-5 foot centers combined with our [Sedge Meadow Seed Mix](#) should yield a highly effective sedge meadow restoration if the hydrologic and soil conditions are appropriate.

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PLANT FEATURE: MARSH OR SWAMP MILKWEED (*ASCLEPIAS INCARNATA*)

A beautiful milkweed native to a variety of sunny wetlands, Swamp Milkweed is a favorite of the Monarch butterfly. At our nursery, this species is the most heavily favored as a larval food plant of the four species of milkweeds that we grow. The beautiful pink flowers release a delicate fragrance when pollinators are active during warm days in July and August. Typically reaching 3-4 feet in height, it performs best in consistently moist soil. It will tolerate extended periods of shallow inundation in wetland or storm water settings. Swamp milkweed occurs in sedge meadows, pond margins and marshes throughout the Midwest. In a restoration, it should be planted with associates in our [Sedge Meadow Mix](#) and [Early Successional Wetland mix](#).

