

PLUGS VS SEED

While seeding is generally regarded as the most cost effective method to establish native plant communities, there are situations where plugs are far more successful. Among these situations are storm water practices, lake edge plantings, and establishment of certain species whose reproduction is primarily vegetative. Finally, in urban or other high visibility locations, the appearance of a seeded area will typically be unacceptable to your client during the first two years of development.

Storm water practices should always be established via plugs. Due to the periodic inundation followed by rapid drying in the well-drained medium required for these BMPs to function, this environment is an extremely difficult one for germination. Further, the tiny native seeds are difficult to hold in place even under blanket in flowing water situations where swales are utilized for conveyance. Finally, these BMPs are often located in high visibility locations such as parking lot islands, and street-scaping, where the slow development of a seeded native plant community would be unacceptable.

Emergent pond edge plantings are another situation where plugs will yield far better results than seeding. This environment is typically subjected to wave action and rapid fluctuations in water level as a result of storm events. These factors typically result in the loss of the seed through washout. In contrast, properly installed plugs accompanied by waterfowl exclusion fence will mature very quickly, forming an effective lake edge planting within a few months of installation.

Certain species have either focused their reproduction via vegetative means or have seeds that are commercially unavailable or extremely expensive. Since these species often spread rapidly via rhizomes once established, they will quickly form colonies from a plug planting. Included in this list are Lake Sedge (*Carex lacustris*), Riverbank Tussock Sedge (*Carex emoryi*), Woolly Sedge (*Carex pellita*), and Common Oak Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*).

PLANT FEATURE: WILD SENNA (*CASSIA HEBECARPA*, *SENNA HEBECARPA*)



This robust perennial legume is an outstanding addition to native restorations in a variety of mostly sunny habitats. Native to wet prairies, sedge meadows and streambanks, it thrives in moist soil, typically growing 4 to 6 feet in height. The compound foliage resembles that of a black locust tree. In mid-summer, a large panicle of showy yellow flowers blooms for several weeks. The flowers are tremendously popular with bumblebees. So many bumblebees visit our seed production rows, the buzz can be heard from over 50 feet away during the flowering season. The flowers develop into conspicuous 3 inch long seed pods by fall, containing large seeds that are consumed by quail.

Wild Senna is a bold plant for the landscape where its large size and clump-forming habit can be accommodated. It is appropriate for restorations in many moist situations, including riparian and floodplain plantings, where it is highly tolerant of temporary inundation. Appropriate associates may be found in our [Sedge Meadow](#) and [Wet-Mesic Prairie](#) seed mixes.