

## PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK



As soon as the seed was mixed in December, Mike Bullerman (pictured above) and Jared Sullivan got busy planting high-diversity, local-ecotype prairie restorations at sites in several Nebraska counties. E-Z Flow spreaders are pulled behind ATVs to broadcast the seed onto the soil. A harrow affixed to the back of the spreader lightly covers the seed, ensuring good soil contact. Planting will continue through May.



NEWSLETTER  
January/February 2022

### Why High-Diversity, Local-Ecotype?

Prairie restoration and habitat plantings can be approached in a number of ways. Some seed mixes may focus on narrow wildlife interests and contain a small number of species, while others may contain species outside of their original range or of unknown genetic origin. The approach taken by Prairie Plains over the past 40 years is to provide ecological restoration of prairie, meadow and wetland habitats in central and eastern Nebraska. We focus on creating diverse native plant communities, harvesting seed from over 225 species (high-diversity) that get incorporated into site-specific restoration mixes. Seed is harvested from wild plant populations in central and eastern Nebraska – typically within a 100-mile radius of planting locations (local-ecotype).



Restoration projects using high-diversity seed mixes have the potential to develop diverse, native vegetation that more closely resembles remnant prairie and wet meadow habitats. These diverse plant communities are often found to be more resilient, as they are better suited to withstand stochastic events such as drought and flooding, improving the likelihood of restoration success. Locally harvested seed provides genetic ecotypes that are likely well-adapted to planting locales. We also take special care to plant site-appropriate mixes by mapping soil types and hydrology across a planting area.

Restorations that develop species-rich plant communities support a wider diversity of insects and other wildlife. Restoration efforts can positively impact native pollinator communities - for example, native bee abundance and diversity were found to be high (comparable to remnants) at high-diversity restoration sites planted by Prairie Plains in the Prairie Corridor in Lancaster County. In addition to benefits for wildlife, prairie restorations surrounding remnant sites have the ability to protect native plant species richness within remnants by providing a buffer from invasion of non-native plants from the surrounding landscape. Connecting fragmented habitat with restoration plantings holds a lot of potential for conservation work involving at-risk species.

Since 1980 Prairie Plains has restored 13,944 acres on 320 sites in 60 Nebraska counties. We're proud of the positive impact we've had on native plant and wildlife communities, soil health, water quality, carbon sequestration, rangeland productivity and in creating spaces for people to enjoy and learn about Nebraska ecosystems. Our careful attention to seed source and diversity has created a premium product with outstanding results.



**Winter Explore - Feb. 5**  
 Hikers of all ages enjoyed a wintertime scavenger hunt along the Platte River at Bader Park as they learned more about wildlife, plants and their adaptations to life during the winter months. Join us for the next Winter Explore event on Saturday, March 12, at Gjerloff Prairie!

**PRAIRIE PLAINS LINK**  
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**Upcoming Events**

**March 5** - Bader Park hike with Sarah Bailey featuring migrating waterfowl. 7 a.m.

**March 12** - Winter Explore Day at Gjerloff Prairie. 10 a.m.

**Just Chipping Away**

Land steward Jeff Gustafson (right) and assistant Jared Sullivan never run out of work. Armed with a chainsaw and skid steer with grapple and saw attachment, the crew has been clearing red cedar trees at Sherman Ranch. Encroaching cedars degrade prairie ecosystems and grazing lands and must be controlled with mechanical removal and prescribed fire.



**Look what's growing!**

February is a rewarding month in the greenhouse as new prairie seedlings start to sprout and plants held over from previous years occasionally bloom. Earlier this winter 125 species were planted into flats in the greenhouse. Seedlings are currently being transplanted into cone-tainers and these seedling plugs will be installed at restoration sites and pollinator plantings around eastern and central Nebraska. From left: A mature prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*) rewarded us with an early bloom; The greenhouse bench is coming to life; Green antelopehorn milkweed seedlings (*Asclepias viridis*).

