



Lawns to Legumes Spring 2025 Q+A Session

Planting

- Can my project be a combination of project types, such as a pocket planting plus an adjacent native tree?
 - Yes, you can do multiple project types.
- Can I add or expand onto an existing garden for my Lawns to Legumes project?
 - Yes. Remember to take a before and after photo so our team can see what you have changed.
- Can these funds be used for prairie restoration?
 - Yes. This would be considered a pollinator meadow project type.
- What suggestions do you have for areas that you're interested in planting, but have invasive species? Do you have suggestions for preparing soil in areas with invasive species?
 - Generally speaking, it will be difficult to establish a native pollinator planting without first removing the invasive species in the area. Focus on a small area at first. Small infestations may be controlled by repeatedly pulling plants in the spring. Large infestations may be mowed several times in a season to kill plants and prevent seeding. Be sure to mow plants in early- to mid-May before they bloom.
 - Mulching your pollinator planting will help with weed control! Some folks put cardboard over their garden bed and cut out holes for their desired plants. You can also try using edging around your garden bed. Something that you can insert a few inches into the ground can help keep weeds from invading your planting. More frequent weeding will also be beneficial.
- How do I establish a pollinator lawn if the site is primarily covered with creeping charlie?
 - The method we covered during the Kick-Off Webinar is called overseeding, and it is most effective for sites with less weed disturbance. If you are dealing with a lot of aggressive weeds on your site, We would recommend attending the Pollinator Lawns project webinar on March 11!
 - But briefly, if you're dealing with weed pressure and want to do a pollinator lawn, you'll need to start with a "blank slate" by removing existing grass before seeding.

We don't recommend most herbicides, due to their impact on water quality. Instead, you can manually remove with a sod cutter or smother the grass with cardboard. There are more details on the [Turf Alternatives section](#) of the Plan a Project page on bluethumb.org.

- It may be more practical and successful to do a small pocket planting in one area of your yard this season if your weed pressure is high.
- If we live on a small pond, are there any options for this area (shoreline)?
 - Yes, you are welcome to do a pocket planting along your shoreline! Please check out the [Shoreline Stabilization](#) section of our Plan a Project page for detailed guidance.
- Are there any recommended natives that can survive the winter in a container?
 - On our [Resources Page](#), we have a few container planting design templates with recommended plants!
- What is the definition of residential? My small farm is 4 miles away from my house.
 - If you have land you want to do your project on that's not right next to your house, that is okay! If you want to do your project on an address that's different from the one you applied for the grant with, please contact the L2L Helpline.
- Minneapolis has been talking about changing the rules around boulevard gardens; it would be helpful to learn what the current rules are so I don't end up planting something that I get in trouble for.
 - As mentioned in the Kick-Off Webinar, if you're planning to do a pocket planting in your boulevard (the strip of land between the sidewalk and street), it's important to check what your city or town's height restrictions are. Some cities like Minneapolis have different height restrictions if a planting is on a corner.
 - In Minneapolis, here are the current restrictions:
 - Flowers grown on that part of any boulevard between the sidewalk and the roadway are allowed without a permit from the city, provided that they shall not exceed thirty-six (36) inches in height, and flowers grown within twenty (20) feet of an intersection, alley or driveway approach, or five (5) feet of any public utility fixture shall not exceed eighteen (18) inches in height.
 - The Minneapolis City Council is voting on a [potential boulevard ordinance amendment](#) on Feb 25. If passed, the following changes will be made:
 - Within forty (40) feet of a road intersection, or within ten (10) feet of an alley or driveway, vegetation cannot be taller than 18 inches (*before this limit was 3 feet*).
 - Vegetation within three (3) feet of any fixed objects, including fire hydrants, shall be no taller than eighteen (18) inches above curb height. (*Before no plants could be within 3 feet of fixed objects*).
 - Hedges and shrubs shall be maintained to be no closer to the sidewalk than six (6) inches and no closer to the road gutter than two (2) feet.

- Do pollinator lawns require specific soil types or conditions?
 - The bee lawn seed mixes that you can get from Minnesota retailers like Twin City Seed can be effective on a variety of soil conditions. You can look at the product details of different mixes and they will specify what conditions they will work best with. Pollinator lawns are typically more effective on sunnier sites, though Twin City Seed has offered a mix better suited to shady sites as well.
- Is it beneficial to add compost to the soil? Working with heavily compacted clay.
 - In most cases you shouldn't need to add any compost. Your native plants should do just fine in your original soil (provided you chose plants for your soil type). Just mulch on top of the open dirt, 2-4 inches.
 - That being said if you have heavily compacted soil, adding compost can help, especially when starting a new planting. Compost can help the soil retain moisture, adds nutrients to the soil and increases microbial activity, all good for plant health. You can put a handful of compost in each planting hole and also work 1-2 inches of compost into the top few inches of your soil before planting.
 - Landscaping companies and nurseries sell compost in bulk, which is usually the most cost-effective option. As for what kind, that would depend on your soil. If you know your soil is lacking in nitrogen (which can be found out with a soil test), manure compost is a good option. Otherwise any organic compost from a vendor will do the trick! Again, compost is not required for a successful planting, if you choose not to add any. Native plants are well adapted to Minnesota's soils and can do well even in poor soil conditions.
- Should a soil test be done for native plants?
 - Soils don't often need to be amended for native plants because these plants are already adapted to our current soil conditions. However, if you're concerned about your soil (for example, plants have always seemed to struggle growing in it), you can do a soil test. The University of Minnesota Soil Testing Lab offers soil tests at a low cost, though soil tests are not a reimbursable expense under the Lawns to Legumes grant. You can also bring in a sample of your soil to your local native plant nursery and ask them what plants would do best in your soil.
- Lawn garden won't be possible unless we stop the mowing at this HOA. Is there someone who could guide me through that?
 - Working within the requirements of an HOA can be challenging! If a pollinator lawn is not an option for you, could you ask your HOA about doing a small pocket planting in one section of your yard. If that fails, you can do a small container planting. We give some tips for talking with neighbors or HOAs about native plantings here: <https://bluethumb.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/11/Talking-With-Your-Neighbors-About-Your-Project.pdf>

Maintenance

- Herbivore protection: What are mesh nets? Are they available for purchase? I have bunnies and deer in my neighborhood.

- Any sort of wire basket can work as a net to cover individual plants if it's too difficult to fence your whole planting area with chicken wire or if you just need to protect a few plants. A cost effective option is buying mini trash baskets.
- How do you split plants?
 - Splitting (or dividing) native plants is a great way to propagate them, keep them healthy, and prevent overcrowding. The process varies depending on the plant species, but in general:
 - Spring or fall is the best time to split plants (before new growth starts or after plants have finished flowering)
 - Only divide mature, healthy plants (3+ years old)
 - Water thoroughly the day before to reduce stress
 - Dig up the root ball, trying to keep the root system as intact as possible
 - Shake off excess soil and use hands or a spade to divide the roots. Replant the split plants immediately and water.
- How is the best way to get rid of excessive aggressive native plants like goldenrod?
 - Don't be afraid to do some selective 'editing.' Where overcrowding of plants is taking place you can remove stems and create some extra space.
 - Divide and transplant! For clumping plants like asters, you can divide them and relocate to less dense areas or share with neighbors/friends.
 - You can 'deadhead' (remove the flower part) from aggressive spreaders throughout the growing season before they start spreading their seeds. You can stagger your deadheading throughout your garden to make sure pollinators are still getting continuous blooms.
 - Add edging if you haven't already! Small rock borders can prevent spreading.
 - When adding new plants this season, try going for more slow-growing, non-aggressive natives. We have a filter for that in our Plant Finder.

Eligible Expenses

- Itasca Soil & Water sells native plants. Will this be acceptable to get reimbursed? They are not on your list, just want to make sure this is ok to get some plants through them.
- Thanks!
- Yes! In addition to native plant retailers, your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) may sell native plants and trees to residents, and some offer native garden kits. Check out your local SWCD website—many host pre-orders for their annual sales.
 - On a similar note, during the spring many organizations such as MN Master Gardeners host annual native plant sales. These are also a good option for getting native plants, just watch out for cultivars. We have a blog post that lists the dates of native plant sales happening throughout the state this spring: <https://bluethumb.org/spring-2025-native-plant-sales-in-minnesota/>
 - With plant sales, if you don't get an itemized receipt remember to keep a list of the plant species you bought or take a picture of the plant tags.

- Can I use Dutch Elm wood chips for mulch?
 - Yes, any type of mulch is reimbursable, though non-dyed mulch is preferred.
- We had a large amount of shredded mulch delivered last fall. However they have color added. Can we use this?
 - Yes. Keep in mind that the program can only reimburse purchases made after the date that you received your grant award (January 15), so you could use that mulch for your project but the program cannot reimburse it.
- Does the grant only cover products or also services (having someone to get rid of invasive plants for example)
 - Yes! Please see the [Eligible Expenses Guide](#). You can be reimbursed for hiring helpers or consultation, design, or installation services. That can include essential site prep work like removing invasive plants. Remember that your project focus must be the addition to new native plants and/or trees. All contracted work must be through the current grant period to be eligible for reimbursement. For hiring helpers (family, neighbors, etc.), you can use our cash receipt template (linked on the Eligible Expenses Guide to make a receipt.
- Are we restricted only to buying plugs or seeds? Can we purchase mature plants?
 - Yes! Minnesota Native seeds, plugs, and plants are all eligible for reimbursement.
- Are pavers (to walk through a pollinator meadow) reimbursable?
 - Pavers used for edging are reimbursable, but pavers for a pathway through a garden would not be.
- Please go into more detail regarding serviceberry bushes. What kind can I/should I buy for them to be eligible?
 - Serviceberry trees and shrubs are native to Minnesota and are eligible for reimbursement. Serviceberry cultivars are one of the cultivars on our exception list (See the Eligible Expenses Guide). Any serviceberry cultivar can be reimbursed.
- Where can I find eligible native trees and shrubs?
 - Visit our [Native Plants Nurseries and Retailers page](#). Retailer listings note whether trees and shrubs are sold. If you're in the metro or SE MN area, Outback Nursery in Hastings offers many native tree options.

Reimbursement Request

- Some receipts are not detailed. Will we need to keep or document each species we purchase?
 - Yes, create a list of the plants associated with that receipt & save the plant tags.
 - We developed a Project Tracker spreadsheet for you to easily track expenses! It's at the top of the "Plan and Install Your Project" section of the Grantee Guide and we'll share the direct link:
<https://bluethumb.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/01/L2L-Project-Tracker.xls>
[x](#)
- My plan is to order the Prairie Moon Nursery Semi-Shade Woodland Garden Kit - can I order that way for reimbursement or do I have to order individual plants?

- If you purchase a kit from one of the retailers on our Native Plants Nurseries and Retailers List, it's okay if the receipt is not itemized. These kits have been approved by our team. If the kit is from a retailer not on our list, please upload a list of the plants or a photo of the plant tags.

Misc.

- Have you run into any issues around folks with bee sting allergies?
 - Our team has not personally run into issues. Many of the native bees we're trying to attract with our pollinator plantings either don't sting or only sting if they feel threatened. That being said, here's some tips you can keep in mind to safely coexist with bees:
 - Choose a planting option that only takes up a part of your yard. Native pocket plantings only require a small portion of your yard and leave plenty of room of recreation.
 - For the most part, bees are not aggressive and prefer to keep to themselves unless you interact with them directly. They are most active during the warmest parts of the day, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
 - If a bee does get close, try to remain calm and not swat. They are curious about you, and may have confused you for a flower if you smell sweet or are wearing bright colors.
 - Wear shoes. The most threatening thing you can do is step on a bee.
 - For more information about sharing space with bees, check out this resource: <https://bluethumb.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/12/Dont-Bee-Afraid-Under-standing-Bees.pdf>
- Do you have any promotional materials (bookmarks size or something small like that) that we can share with neighbors, friends, or relatives as we talk with them about the benefits of native plants?
 - You're welcome to print out any of the downloadable materials on our Resources page: <https://bluethumb.org/public-resources/>
 - We do have a limited number of smaller postcard sized handouts, contact the L2L Helpline if you are interested.
- "I never got a link to join the Hive, not even in the emails listed in the Webinar. How can I find a link, myself?"
 - The link to the Hive is included in the Welcome email newsletter we send and in the email that was sent to you after you filled out the Confirmation Form. Here is the direct link to join: <https://bluethumb.thinkific.com/products/communities/The-Hive-Spring2025>
- Can we have access to Hive after the project is completed?
 - Yes, you'll continue to be able to access The Hive after the spring grant period is over, but program staff will not be monitoring it for questions as frequently.
- May I use The Hive to offer gardening services?

- There is a chat space in the Hive called “Marketplace” which would be an appropriate place to share about your offerings!
- Can I apply more than once for the grant?
 - To give as many people as possible the opportunity to start a project, Lawns to Legumes can only award one grant per individual. However, your city or local soil and water conservation district or watershed district may have similar native planting grant opportunities! We list some of those in this recent blog post: <https://bluethumb.org/local-grants-for-native-plantings/>

For more information about your Lawns to Legumes grant, visit the Grantee Guide:

<https://bluethumb.org/lawns-to-legumes/grantee-guide/>