

What Makes a Successful Habitat Kit Proposal and Planting?



Planning, site preparation, and hard work yield a bounty of pollinator plant blooms. Your habitat kit can, too, if you set yourself up for success by crafting a solid proposal and planting plan. (Photos [l – r]: Donald Farm / Marie Raboin, Brooklyn School Garden / Sarah Mullins, Donald Farm / Marie Raboin).

Below are a few key recommendations that will improve the quality of your proposal and, should you be awarded a habitat kit, ensure the success of your pollinator habitat project. Lessons learned from past kit awardees highlight the importance of site prep, mulch and water access (for plant plugs), and diligent weeding.

1. Contact me before completing your proposal to check-in on your habitat dreams and planting plan.
 - I can help identify the suitability of your site for a kit planting, recommend appropriate site preparation options, and answer any other questions you may have.
2. The timing, longevity, and method(s) of site prep you use should effectively set up your planting approach (using plant plugs or seeds) and your expected planting date.
 - Plan out site prep well in advance of your planting date. If site conditions won't allow for the habitat kit to be planted in a given year or by your desired planting date, then plan for multiple years of site preparation. We prioritize proposals and Habitat Kit Action Plans that are thorough in their site preparation and can accommodate multi-year projects.
 - Review Xerces' [Habitat Kit Case Studies](#), [Pollinator Meadow Habitat Installation Guide](#), and [Organic Site Preparation Guide](#) for site prep options.
3. Be honest in your commitment to prep, plant, and steward your habitat.
 - Native plantings take effort and care that, for many reasons, may be in short supply during the growing season. Make sure your farm or community project has the help you need to be successful with your pollinator habitat site prep and to keep it well cared for through the first few years.

4. Know your soils, sun availability, and weed pressure to help inform plug and seed mix design.
 - To ensure the success and longevity of your planting, it is best practice to select species whose habitat preferences meet the sun/shade and soil moisture characteristics of your site. While many native prairie plants will successfully grow across a range of soil moistures and sun exposures, too much shade or too much/little moisture can leave your plants stunted and scarce.
5. From a weed perspective, native habitat projects aren't at all different from any other vegetable planting where you use seeds (e.g. carrots) or transplants (e.g. peppers). If you think you'll have weed problems planting a vegetable crop in your habitat site, you'll have weed problems with your native habitat, too.
 - For projects using plant plugs, apply mulch pre- or post planting to keep weeds at bay. If you aren't using mulch, you must detail a rigorous weed management plan in your Habitat Kit Action Plan.
 - Site prep of the kit site can stimulate vigorous growth from a nascent weed seed bank. Pulling and/or mowing competitive weeds like pigweeds, thistles, burdocks, lambsquarter, and others - is a must.

Habitat Kit Red Flags

A few site conditions may especially set you up for a failed habitat kit planting. If any of the below are true for your proposed kit site, you should A) choose a different location or B) your site requires a suffocating weed barrier and wood chip mulch (for projects that use plant plugs) and/or at least one or more years of site preparation previous to planting.

1. Existing vegetation includes reed canary grass, brome grass, quack grass, canada thistle, and/or other problematic perennial species.
2. The habitat site is extremely weedy and/or soils are rich and the weed seed bank is known to be high.
3. For plant plugs, the habitat site is distant from a water source or cannot be easily irrigated.
4. Structures or trees heavily shade the area.
5. Potential soil contamination from past land use.

Process and Timeline

Proposals, available on the [WI Habitat Kit website](#), may be submitted at any time and are reviewed as they are received until funding has been exhausted. Proposals are best submitted well in advance of your expected planting date to allow for their timely review and for the thorough completion of site preparation and planting practices. If your proposal meets the program qualification and eligibility requirements, you will be asked to participate in a screening call with Xerces staff before receiving a final decision on your project proposal.

Contact

Micah Kloppenburg

WI Pollinator Habitat Specialist, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

micah.kloppenburg@xerces.org