

Douglas County Success from the Field

Bee Friendly Pollinator Planting



Background

When Paula Pedersen and Sara Thomsen purchased their first 40-acre Oakland Township property ten years ago, it was intended as a buffer from development. They quickly learned that the 3-acre field across the road from their other acreage in Hawthorne Township was the perfect spot for their vegetable gardens, orchard and solar array. However, it wasn't until after an NRCS Forest Management Plan, financed through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), that they began to put even wider ranging goals to work on their properties. Paula and Sara, hobby beekeepers and organic gardeners, looked to the fallow field as a new habitat for pollinators.

Through EQIP assistance, Paula and Sara received financial support and technical guidance to implement native pollinator plantings with species that bloom throughout the season.



Post herbicide prep

Due to their involvement in sustainable agriculture and environmentally based groups in the Duluth/Superior community, they partnered with a local natural landscaping contractor to establish native habitat, providing a long-term, ecologically sound landscape adapted to the existing conditions of the site.



Controlled burn of pollinator site.

Highlights

In late summer 2016, the site was treated with herbicide to kill off weeds 30 days before disturbing vegetation. They also removed dead vegetation with a controlled burn and disk/tilled the site to stimulate weed seed germination. In spring 2017, once weed seed germinated, the site was sprayed with



No-till drill planting.



herbicide prior to planting. Next, they prepped the soil by using a harrow to create a smooth seedbed. In spring/summer of 2017, they also planted seed by no-till drilling. To combat erosion, they also planted a cover crop, along with the native grasses and flowers.

In 2018, during the first growing season, they actively managed the plot by mowing and completing annual weed control. In the following seasons, they completed monitoring, prescribed burning, mowing, spot spraying, spot mowing, herbicide wicking or hand weeding.

According to Paula, the biggest surprise of the project was the effort it took to kill the existing weeds and seed. They tried their best to garden organically but were unable to successfully prepare the field properly without use of non-organic chemicals. "As with many things, it felt like a conflict of values. The pollinator field won," explained Paula.

Future Plans

Paula and Sara plan to continue to maintain the field, add to the gardens and orchards, as well as partner with NRCS again to add a high tunnel through the EQIP program.



Wisconsin
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

