

Timeline for Naturalizing Wet Field Areas/Vegetation

Area Near Sullivan playground:

Right now, the area is a mix of annual non-native weeds, some annual and perennial native sedges, rushes and forbs which are not extremely conservative but form a great matrix and starting point. Unfortunately, there are also some incredibly invasive nonnative perennial plants that have started to take over the area. If left alone for the next 2-5 years, there will only be invasive reed canary grass and invasive Canada thistle, forming a monoculture of plants that were introduced from Eurasia and sustain no wildlife or ecological value.

October, 2022

This fall, herbicide the invasive reed canary grass and invasive Canada thistle. Plant approximately 400 native species of wetland and prairie plants (donated by us) before October 15th. Water the planted plugs until frost. Winter of this year, sow approximately 3 lbs of native wet prairie/sedge meadow and mesic prairie seeds, mostly in the areas that were previously invasive reed canary grass. Avoid any grasses in the seed mix due to the invasive seed bank in the soil.

Students can definitely be involved in the planting of plants and the sowing of seed. They can also collect seed from nearby areas (such as our ComEd Prairie right next to the school) if so desired. May want to flag out the areas to be seeded in case it snows before sowing seed.

2023

- Spring - herbicide invasive reed canary grass and Canada thistle. Monitor for invasives. watch for seedlings.
- Summer - herbicide the invasives.
- Fall - enjoy, collect seeds of desired species if so desired.

2024

- Spring - burn the area (PHNRC). monitor for invasives and take care of immediately or before they go to seed. Seed the area with collected seed after the burn for really great soil-seed contact.
- Summer- enjoy
- Fall - monitor for invasives. Collect seed of desired species from the area or from other areas, especially grasses that were not introduced until invasive reed canary has been removed for good.

2025

Monitor for invasives, otherwise enjoy. Consider enlarging the area or planting new areas because it's so great. Can collect seed (but not necessary at this point because it is beautiful and self-sustaining).

2026

- Spring - burn the area (PHNRC) Monitor for invasives. Should be only one or two invasives at this point.

2027 - Enjoy. Always monitor for invasives.

2028 - Burn in the Spring

Following years are just watching out for invasives and burning every 1-3 years.

*Please note that maintenance has a reduced role as the prairie area evolves and matures.

Wetter Cattail Area:

This area is overtaken with non-native cattails. It also has a few sapling trees, including one larger silver maple that is wrapping roots around a storm drain.

October, 2022

This fall, conduct a prescribed burn of the cattail area. PHNRC will provide EPA permit, notifications, expertise and burn crew to safely conduct the burn. This will allow much of the accumulated thatch to burn off, exposing the bare earth in the spring to better see the cattails coming up and anything else that may be making an appearance.

2023

- Spring - herbicide invasive cattails with Aquaneat, safe for aquatic use. If desired, plant plugs may be introduced in the areas not taken over by cattails at this point.
- Summer - continue to herbicide the invasive cattails and any other invasive plants (PHNRC).
- Fall - plant plugs of native plant if desired (not in cattail area), collect seeds of desired species, watch for cattail reemergence and hand wick if necessary (if other desired plants are found among the cattails). Sow seeds in area not taken over by cattails.

2024

- Spring - monitor for invasives and take care of immediately or before they go to seed. Plant plugs in cattail area if desired if cattails are no longer visible or sparse. Otherwise, continue to herbicide cattails.
- Summer - enjoy. No need to water because of soil moisture unless drought.
- Fall - monitor for invasives. Collect seed of desired species. Conduct a prescribed burn. Sow seed after the burn. May sow seed in the cattail area at this point.

2025

Monitor for invasives, otherwise enjoy. Consider enlarging the area or planting new areas because it's so great. Can collect seed (but not necessary at this point because it is beautiful and self-sustaining).

2026 - Spring - burn the area (PHNRC) Monitor for invasives. Should be only one or two invasives at this point.

2027 - Enjoy. Always monitor for invasives.

2028 - Burn in the Spring

Responsibilities:

PHNRC will provide guidance, help, seeds, seedlings, and do prescribed burns, participate in educational activities as invited and time allows. MacArthur students can help plant seedlings, water seedlings, and teachers at all surrounding D23 schools can use the area to study a wide variety of science topics.

Prospect Heights Natural Resource Commissioners:

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