



May 23, 2020

## Planting Forward Webinar with Clark McLeod

### Questions & Answers

**Q. You are talking about large areas of land, what about smaller areas of yards? What is the smallest beneficial area of a pollinator planting?**

A. If you are able to attend our next two webinars, you will see that an area as small as 10'X10' is sufficient to have native plants in your yard. Or, a three or four foot area along your fence line. Again, our challenge is to have each landowner convert 50% of their mowed/sprayed grass to native plants.

**Q: Do I have to live in Linn County to be part of the Pollinator Zones movement? Where can I find more information about this program?**

A: No, you don't have to live in Linn County, we'd love to see this initiative spread out from Linn County and beyond. Find more information and sign up

<https://monarchresearch.org/pollinator-zones/>

**Q: Can I share the Planting Forward webinar? Where can I find a recorded version?**

A: Yes, please share! A link to the recording, along with materials can be found on the Monarch Research website under the events tab: <https://monarchresearch.org/events/>

**Q. What native plants are best for a shady yard?**

A. There are many native plants and shrubs that do well in shade or part shade. If you go to the Prairie Nursery's Natives for Shade webpage you will see that a) they are sold out of most all of these, and b) there are many many varieties of natives that do well in full shade. If you have partial sun, you can still plant a rich mix of forbs and grasses and will still get decent results but you just won't see all the species.

**Q. We just lost a mature oak. What is a good ornamental to put in its place?**

A. You have a pretty wide range of choices. This publication from the Iowa DOT is an example of the list of species you could pick from. A couple of my favorites are the Basswood, or Quaking Aspen or Honey Locust.

<https://secure.iowadot.gov/Irtf/docs/GuidetoCommonTreesShrubs.pdf>

**Q. What oak trees are native to Iowa? Any other trees that are native?**

A. The native that packs the most punch for insect species is the Burr Oak. The Iowa DOT publication will give you additional insights.

<https://secure.iowadot.gov/Irtf/docs/GuidetoCommonTreesShrubs.pdf>

**Q. Should one remove trees that are non-native such as the Ginkgo or can one leave those and continue to plant native only going forward?**

A. Your call. If you have the room, you can leave them, but if you're tight on space and want to do the right thing, then I'd have them removed.

**Q. I've been planting natives in the back of our lot (an old interurban right of way site which we do own) but the weeds continue to be a huge challenge. What do I need to do or what must I be doing wrong? Any suggestions appreciated.**

A. If after several years all you're seeing is weeds, then it might be best to start over and do a serious job of seedbed preparation (over two growing seasons). Weeds are just amazing in how many seeds they produce. If you ARE seeing natives, then keep it mowed throughout the summer to about 8-10 inches high to allow light to get down to the plants.

**Q. I prepared my space as instructed and planted seeds from Jim Hoffman about 18 months ago. I cannot tell if I was successful or if I just have a few good plants with "weeds" that are undesirable. My area has a lot of clay and is wet. Also, should I join the new program for 5000 pollinators or am I already counted in that number?**

A. Yes, I remember exchanging with you. Prairies take a long time to develop. If you are seeing a few native species, then you just need to keep it mowed to a height of 8-10 inches and stay patient. If you filled out a commitment form when you got seed from us, you are already a PZ in our database. If not, then you should register by all means!

**Q. The area I set aside for planting has been laced with Roundup 3 times and still can't kill the weeds. What am I doing wrong?**

A. You're not doing anything wrong. Weeds are incredibly tenacious, just like native plants are once they get established. But, it may take you two growing seasons to start to see bare soil and slower re-emergence. I know it's a slow process.

**Q. Is it important to first kill the existing weed/seed bed or can one overseed in the fall and manage the area going forward the next spring?**

A. Some would tell you that this will work. I don't believe that. The native seeds (some of which are tiny) can't get down through the thatch and will not germinate. You might get a few plants, but it would not be worth the cost of the seed (which is expensive).

**Q. Will someone come out to our land and help us identify the correct areas where we can do this work?**

A: We do not have the staff to make home visits; but if you send a picture to us using our contact tab at [MonarchResearch.org](http://MonarchResearch.org), we can comment. There are professional habitat restoration companies in the Corridor but of course they will charge fees as you would expect. Giving the [Linn County Master Gardeners](#) Hotline a call is another great way to get advice.

**Q: Does Monarch Research provide financial assistance to landowners wishing to convert their property to pollinator friendly habitat?**

A: We're committed to providing landowners with a pollinator-friendly seed mix to help you get started. We do not have any other additional grants or financial resources in place. Depending on the type of land, there may be assistance available from the [USDA-NRCS](#) offices here in our region. That is usually for much larger areas but is a great set of programs.

**Q: Does Monarch Research provide labor and/or equipment to support our land conversion?**

A: We provide seeds, support, and education, but our small staff and volunteer base is not able to provide labor for land clearing or planting. Some landowners have reached out to local scout troops or other organizations that might be looking for community service based projects.

**Q. Along with a nice patch of milkweed, we have a large number of black raspberry bushes in our yard. Of course the berries are tasty to eat and we know the bees love to visit them as they're blooming. Would they be considered useful as part of a pollinator habitat?**

A. Yes, black raspberry bushes do support pollinators and assuming you can control the spread, they are fine to have in the mix with other natives. Here's a resource that talks about that: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/portals/idnr/uploads/forestry/General/ForestPollinatorspub.pdf>

**Q. As you said, the nurseries haven't specified in the past, what plants were native or not...so a lot of us have no idea. I know there is more information out there, but many people have moved to homes and lots full of non-native plants and trees and it will take some time to transform them. What plants other than Milkweed would be good for a small corner home in the middle of the city? Can we have 'decorative landscapes' in town, along with a concern for the environment? And what is your take on the future of small homeowners lawns that are in the heart of the city?**

A. Hopefully, PZ 101 and PZ 102 webinars will fully answer that question. If you aren't registered already, join us! <https://monarchresearch.org/events/>

**Q. You mentioned that there will be some guidance about what to plant. Will there be some help about how to establish and maintain the pollinator zone?**

A. Join us for Pollinator Zones 101 (Saturday, May 30) and Pollinator Zones 201 (Saturday, June 6) where establishing and maintaining PZs will be the focus topic.

**Q. We have mostly sandy soil - what plants would be a good pollinator zone?**

A. If you buy a seed mix from a reputable source, you can specify your soil type and they will make a recommendation. Sun and slope are also important elements. Finally, you should specify whether you want tall or shorter plants in your prairie. The Pollinator Zones seed mix, is one that works across a variety of soil types and does not include much tall grass. It should provide a decent array of species in sandy soil if that's what you choose to plant.