

Florida Landowner Assistance Program

Practice Standard - Native Vegetation Establishment



Definition

Establishment of native trees, shrubs, forbs, and/or grasses to improve wildlife habitat structure and composition.

Purpose

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following purposes:

- To improve wildlife habitat for various wildlife species, including imperiled species.
- To restore and maintain ecological conditions beneficial to various wildlife species.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

This practice may be applied on any private land where deemed needed to improve wildlife habitat conditions in compliance with other practice standards and specifications.

Criteria

I. General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

The plant species selected to improve habitat structure and composition shall be determined by the assigned biologist conducting the Needs Assessment. Application of the prescribed treatment will be based on GIS analysis, site examination, and featured wildlife species and/or habitat types. The landowner shall obtain all necessary permits before implementation of the practice. Planning and application shall comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws, rules, and regulations. Only those species found on the Landowner Assistance Program Native Vegetation Species List will be applicable. Species considered locally invasive or noxious will not be used. Species selected will be indigenous to the site and will reflect species composition of the desired stands with a preference given to localized genetic material. Plant material collected or grown from material collected within a 200-mile radius from the site is considered local.

II. Specific Criteria for Tree/Shrub Planting Dates

Planting pines in December or January will generally provide the best survival. Deciduous shrubs are best planted during late winter (do not plant if the surface of the soil is frozen). Late fall is best for evergreen shrubs. Herbaceous species should be planted in early spring. Planting of containerized seedlings or balled stock can extend well beyond the winter months, with good survival, as long as the plants are stored, handled, and planted properly and receive adequate post-planting water and care.

III. Specific Criteria for Tree/Shrub Seedling Care

Seedlings should be picked up immediately prior to planting with a minimum storage time. Maximum storage conditions are achieved when temperatures are maintained between 34 and 38 degrees F and with relative humidity of 85 to 90%. During transportation, storage, and planting, seedlings should be kept:

- Loosely covered.
- Out of direct sunlight.
- From wind and temperatures below freezing or above 50 degrees F.
- Separated from petroleum products or fumes.
- Stacked no more than 2 bundles deep and provided with adequate ventilation.
- Moist by watering root collars twice a week, unless coated with clay slurry or otherwise treated.

Only enough seedlings for one days planting should be carried from storage to the field. Bare root seedlings should be carried in buckets or bags with a moist medium surround the roots. Containerized or balled stock should be carried by the container or the rootball, never by the stem. Optimum winter planting conditions include:

- Daytime temperatures between 35 and 60 degrees F.
- Relative humidity greater than 40%.
- Wind speeds of less than 10 MPH.
- Adequate, but not excessive, soil moisture.

All machine planting should follow topographic contours on sloped ground.

IV. Specific Criteria for Spacing and Stocking Rates of Tree/Shrubs

Trees and shrubs should be spaced to allow normal growth rates and proper form. Spacing should allow for and anticipate the need for future access in order to manage and protect the planted vegetation. On areas where survival will be low or there is an erosion hazard, the stocking rate should be increased. Shrubs may be planted at rates as high as 7,274 per acre. Wider spacing of trees is generally best for wildlife habitat quality. When inter-planting in a scattered stand of desirable trees or shrubs, seedlings should not be planted closer than diameter at breast height (DBH) plus 10 feet.

V. Specific Criteria for Planting Pines

All pines, whether bareroot or containerized, should be:

- Planted vertically and the hole or furrow should be deep enough to avoid L- or J-rooting.
- Certain to plant all containerized longleaf pine seedlings so that the top of the potting plug is slightly above (up to 1/2 inch) the settled soil surface.
- For bareroot longleaf pine the bud should be at the normal ground line. If the bud is more than 1/4 inch above ground or if it is buried greater than 1/2 inch deep after soil settling, it is improperly planted.
- For bareroot South Florida slash pine the root collar should be planted 1 to 3 inches deeper than nursery depth.
- On sites that have been sub-soiled, seedlings should be planted outside of the rip.
- Seedlings should be firmly packed.
- Machine planting on slopes should follow the contour to avoid erosion.

Considerations

Consideration must be given to maintaining existing habitat for imperiled wildlife species. The site preparation method should be cost effective and protect critical wildlife habitat, cultural resources, water resources, and identified unique areas. Attention should also be given to soil productivity, preventing erosion, and conserving unique vegetative communities. Visual quality objectives should be considered when selecting site preparation methods. Anticipate possible off-site effects and modify the site preparation accordingly. Consider personal safety during site preparation activities. Use locally adapted seed and seedlings. Priority should be given to plant materials that have been selected and tested in tree/shrub improvement programs. All plant materials should comply with a minimum standard, such as the American Nursery and Landscape Association, US Forest Service, or state-approved nursery. Tree and shrub arrangement and spacing should allow for and anticipate the need for future access lanes for purposes of treatment area management.

Operation and Maintenance

The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. Stake a tree or shrub if necessary, but for no longer than 1 year. For individual tree or shrub plantings, weed development under the canopy during the first 2 years is the greatest cause of mortality. Mulch with 2 to 4 inches of material of choice for 3 or more times the width of the rootball. Do not allow mulch to be within 2 to 3 inches of the trunk. As trees and shrubs mature and competition for available resources increases, thinning will likely be required. Trees or shrubs of poor form, exhibiting low vigor, or diseased should be removed and the most vigorous individuals retained. Snags (dead standing trees) and cavity trees should be left for wildlife habitat.