



Flower to the People*

MOWING GUIDE

Use this guide to better understand the role of mowing in maintaining a dynamic and diverse polyculture lawn, make decisions about how your community will interact with the site, and provide direction for your landcare team in creating a site-specific annual mowing plan.

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PLANT GROWTH & BIODIVERSITY

Mowing is a tool for guiding plant growth, encouraging biodiversity, and managing aggressive plants.

A thoughtful mowing plan can...

1

Support flower diversity by preventing any one plant from dominating.

2

Encourage seed dispersal by deadheading desirable plants.

3

Manage shade and light exposure to promote lower-growing and slower-germinating plants.

4

Control aggressive and unwanted plants by cutting them lower and more frequently to prevent reseeding.



Biodiversity Tip! Mowing regularly to 4" reduces plant diversity—vary heights when possible.

MOWING HEIGHT & FREQUENCY



HEIGHT?

- **Never** mow below 4 inches.
- **Never** cut more than $\frac{1}{2}$ plant height in any one mowing event.

FREQUENCY?

- Allow 8" growth **after** first seeding
- **Never** mow more than once per month.

When Mowing Paths:

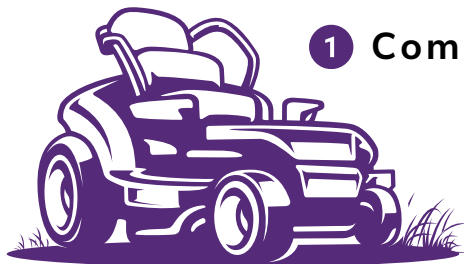
- Essential access paths (valve boxes, utilities, edges) should be kept at 4 inches, and mowed no more than once per month.
- Walking path locations should shift monthly to allow plants to recover.

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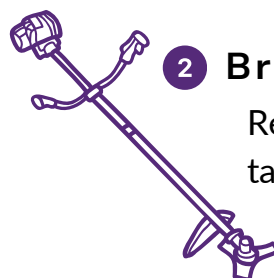
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EQUIPMENT & METHODS



1 Commercial Mowers

Suitable for plants up to 8" but may require multiple passes.



2 Brush Cutters

Recommended for plants taller than 8".

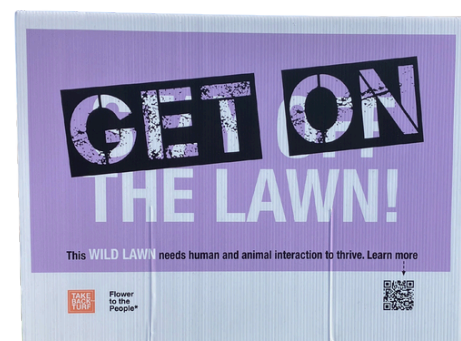


3 Trampling

An alternative way to manage select areas/unwanted plants by replicating animal grazing and disturbance.

Plan events that encourage foot traffic in targeted zones.

Use signage like "Please Stomp on Me" or "Get on the Lawn!" to invite participation.



SEASONAL & LONGTERM MANAGEMENT



Give plants time to regrow between mowing events to support flowering and seed production.



Plants need time to rest and recover.



Never take more than ½ plant height in any one mowing event.

Aggressive plants are an exception to this rule!
Mow or stomp aggressive plants as frequently as needed to keep them from setting seed.

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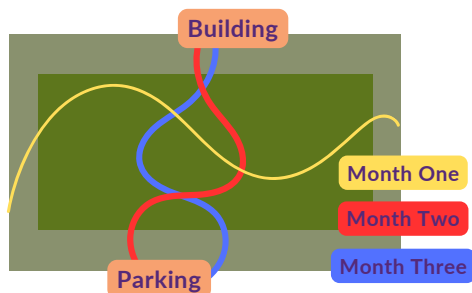
EDGES, PATHS & MAINTENANCE OPTIONS

TIDY EDGES & UTILITY ACCESS



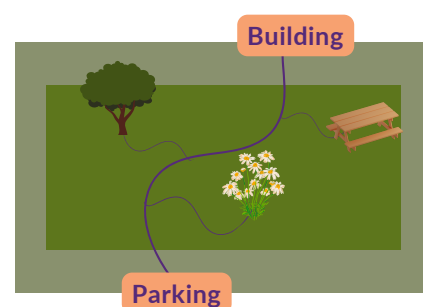
- 1 Keep edges at least one mower-width wide and 4" tall.
- 2 Mow or trim access to utilities, irrigation boxes, and drains as needed.

WALKING PATHS



- 1 Create functional paths from Point A to Point B, shifting their location monthly. Specific annual plans should be developed.
- 2 Mow paths at least 5' wide, adjusting as needed for the site.

WHERE TO WANDER



- 1 Mow paths that lead to trees, picnic spots, or blooming pollinator plants.
- 2 Add signage to enhance the experience.

Maintenance Options for Different Aesthetics

Outcomes below to identify whether Nature-Based or Conventional-Look

	Nature-Based Maintenance	Conventional Look Maintenance
Mow Based on height, not a set schedule: let the landscape guide the timing	X	X
First Mow: Let plants reach 8" before cutting to 4"	X	X
Ongoing Mowing: Based on site goals, but never below 4" and no more than once per month	X	X
Mow for function: Change mowing direction each time to mimic natural grazing	X	X
Equipment: Use sharp blades & leave clippings to enrich the soil	X	X
Clippings: Leave and spread or distribute clippings on the ground, especially in bare spots	X	X
Taller Plants: may be nessescary to cut down by half and then half again at a later date	X	X
Be Aware: mow too frequently or take too much plant material and the landscape is slow to recover	X	X
Uniform Mowing: mow everything monthly to 4"		X
Create 'Mow-saics': Varying mowing patterns and sections to encourage biodiversity	X	
Annual Mowing (if applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If grasses dominate the landscape, then mow before grasses fall over• In fall or post-bird migration when insect populations are lower• Optionally, overwinter and mow in early spring	X	
Mow for fun: To support movement, access, and exploration	X	