

Tools of the Trade & Lessons Learned

These are some of my favorite tools. Some are physical tools used in restoration activities; others are tools used in management activities. Explanation and photos are included.

Management Tools

[Floristic Quality Assessment](#)

Seed Collecting & Processing Tools

[Hammermill](#)

[Clippers and Collecting Equipment](#)

Screens or screening materials

Drying apparatus

Prescribed Burn Tools

[Pumper Unit](#)

Pulaski

Flapper

Back Cans

Invasive Removal Tools

Backpack sprayer

[Parsnip Predator](#)

Handheld sprayers

Brushcutter

Chain saw

Lessons Learned

The following are some of the lessons that we have learned in the process of restoring our woods and planting and

maintaining our prairies.

1. Do not plant seeds or plants that you do not know exactly what they are. Sounds simple and easy but when friends collect seeds and give them to you, they may not be marked properly. It's very hard to tell Canada Goldenrod or Yarrow seed from other seeds with fluff.
2. Land preparation is the best thing you can do to ensure your seeds germinate and aren't outcompeted by weeds. We did 2-year crop rotations on ours but still needed to herbicide weeds before the growing season was over.
3. Keep the invasives and aggressive weedy plants under control the first few years.
4. Don't skimp on the amount of seed you put out the first time. I measure in pounds per acre and plant 10lbs per acre or more.
5. Make sure you have a sufficient amount of those early germinating seeds, such as black-eyed susan, evening primrose, etc. as they will hold the soil weed-free until the longer-lived plants get their roots down.
6. Plant the tall grasses such as Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) in the 3rd or 4th year rather than in the initial planting. This will allow the forbs a chance to become established.
7. Goldenrods – Plant a sparse amount of Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) and Missouri Goldenrod (*Solidago missouriensis*) the first year and no others. You can then add any others into the mix in the 3rd or 4th growing season. Goldenrods can outcomplete other plants in a new planting.
8. When taking advice from prairie folks, make sure you understand their goals and your goals. How things are done for high-quality prairies and remnants can differ from how things are done for large-acreage prairies planted mainly for habitat.