



Critical Area Planting

Planting grass or other vegetation to protect a severely eroding area from soil erosion.

Description

Grass, legumes, trees or shrubs are established in areas where there is excessive soil erosion, often in areas where there is bare ground or steep slopes. The vegetation provides surface cover to stop raindrop splash and slow water flow.

Benefits

- Reduces soil erosion.
- A vegetated area improves water quality by reducing the amount of sediment, nutrients and pesticides running off farmland.
- Protects areas such as dams or gullied areas where vegetation may be difficult to establish.
- Vegetation provides areas of nesting cover for birds and small animals.

Planning

- Will the planting provide adequate protection?
- Are proper soil conservation practices installed above the planting area?
- Will the planting area provide wildlife cover?
- Will the planting be used for grazing livestock?
- Can the area be stabilized using other conservation methods?

Tech Notes

- Protect the area from erosion with annual grasses until permanent cover is established.
- Apply lime and fertilizer, if needed, in the top three inches of the soil before planting.
- Follow recommended seeding rates.
- Severely eroded areas may need a nurse crop like oats. Mow oats before they head out. Mow high to avoid clipping the permanent seeding.
- Areas disturbed during construction on barren slopes 4:1 or steeper should be mulched to provide temporary protection before seeding.
- Mulches include hay, grain, straw or commercially produced wood fiber matting.
- Follow NRCS specifications.

Maintenance

- Allow no grazing the year after planting and prevent overgrazing after permanent cover is established.
- Fence, if needed, and permanently exclude livestock from extremely steep slopes.
- Native or warm season grasses may benefit from periodic burning to reduce and remove competing plants.