

NATIVE SEED PRODUCTION AND PROPAGATION AT MIDEWIN NATIONAL TALLGRASS PRAIRIE, ILLINOIS.

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Abstract: Since its inception, the provision of native plant materials for restoration of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie has been a challenge. At least 13,000 acres is planned for conversion to high-diversity native habitats, including dolomite prairie, upland prairie, wet prairie, sedge meadow, marsh, seep, savanna, and woodland communities; at present, restoration is occurring on approximately 2,000 acres. Sufficient amounts and species diversity of plant materials are not always available for projects, and provenance of plant materials is an issue. To meet these needs, Midewin staff have established their own seed augmentation and propagation programs. These programs focus on increase of appropriate native plants for restoration, with special consideration of species that are not usually available through private firms. Many of these special species are considered 'difficult' to grow or propagate and some require considerable patience: hoary puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*), yellow stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), two-flowered cynthia (*Krigia biflora*), and prairie stiff sedge (*Carex meadii*). Propagation efforts have also focused on rare prairie plants, including Federally endangered leafy prairie-clover (*Dalea foliosa*). Midewin also harvests and processes its native seed, requiring acquisition of appropriate equipment and skills. Currently Midewin staff have over 125 species in propagation; producing over 1,000 pounds in 2009. Midewin staff estimate that seed increase and propagation of at least 350 native forbs, graminoids, and shrubs will be required for long-term restoration needs.