

The Laramie County Conservation District is starting a Native Prairie Island Program which aims at reestablishing small “islands” of native prairie plant species across Laramie County. This is a collaborative effort sponsored by the Microsoft Community Development Team through their Change X Community Challenge Grant and shared with our partners, the Cheyenne High Plains Audubon Society.

Together LCCD and CHPAS are focusing on increasing native pollinator species that are not as common as they once were in Laramie County. These species have subtly disappeared from the landscape for multiple reasons, but with our efforts, we look to increase small islands through revegetating disturbed pasture around county homes and especially, their leach fields. Leach fields can range in size from 1,500-4,000 square feet and augment soil moisture around the structure, giving a distinct advantage to the vegetation that occurs there. Our strategy is to focus on these spaces because of the additional moisture they offer, aiding in the success of our goals. For those who want to expand native wildflowers across their chunk of Wyoming, they can simply add our pollinator seed mix to their grass seed when reseeding their one to four acres of pasture.

Proper soil preparation and watering can hasten your site’s germination, but it’s not necessary for overall success. We are offering free native pollinator seed packages depending on your interest. In order to participate in the program, we ask that you follow a few simple rules which should aid in accomplishing our goals. Landowners should contact the LCCD Range and Wildlife Specialist for a site evaluation of your leach field and pasture to determine the probability of successfully germinating our native prairie pollinators.

Why are native prairie plants important and why would you want them? Well for starters, native pollinators such as bees, butterflies (including monarchs) and numerous birds are benefitted by their presence. If you enjoy watching this class of wildlife, you would do well to get a patch started. Second, the mix we are using is native to this county and used to our climate, meaning you won’t have to baby these plants. Third, our mix is for all growing seasons, meaning you’ll enjoy a splash of color from spring through fall. Lastly, these plants help infiltration through their diverse root structure and some, known as legumes, even fix nitrogen that benefits the growth requirements of other grasses and forbs. These plants were here originally for a reason, we would like them to make a big come back and help the brown and gold state display some different color at your home on the range.