



**Grasses and wildflowers of Iowa's original prairie landscape are well adapted for use in roadsides. They provide the best low-maintenance weed and erosion control. Added benefits include beautification, habitat enhancement and prairie restoration. These native plants form the cornerstone of Iowa's Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) Program.**



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# Rural Services



**Integrated Roadside  
Vegetation Management  
Program,  
Palo Alto County**

**Aaron Steffen,  
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A cooperative program with the Palo  
Alto County Conservation Board,  
County Board of  
Supervisors, and County Engineer

# Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management

## Questions & Answers:

### COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ROADSIDE SEEDING:

#### What happens after a county re-grade or ditch clean out on a secondary road?

The IRVM staff takes over the seeding portion of the project.

**What is planted?** There is a mixture of native grasses and forbes (flowers) seeded into the ditch, and in some instances a cover crop of rye to help the seeding get started and to aid in soil erosion.

#### Why do we plant Native grasses?

They have grown here for thousands of years. The root structure is deeper and stronger than non-native plants such as brome grass. Natives also hold up better to wind and soil erosion, as well as help hold snow back off the roadway in the winter months.

#### How do we plant the Right-of-Way?

We use three methods of planting:

**Drilling** - Drilling grass seed is the most conventional means of seeding by use of a tractor and drill, and is most commonly used on flat areas of the ditch.



**Broadcasting** - For small projects and moderate slope a broadcast seeder may apply seed on top of the soil. We then anchor it in place with a packer.

**Hydroseeding** - For steep slopes a hydroseeder is used. The seed is blown onto the slope with a mixture of ground

newspaper mulch and water. Depending on the type of mulch it will either be a gray or green mat on the soil.



#### How long does it take grasses to grow?

**Year 1:** In the first year after planting the seeding will be weedy with very little observed plant growth.



**Year 2:** Still weedy with short grass cover.



**Year 3:** Grasses starting to become dominant.

**Year 5:** An established stand of native grasses.

#### How do we control weeds in the seeding?

During the first couple of years the seeding may be burned in the spring to set back weed competition but no chemicals will be

applied because of the effects on the grasses and flowers.



### COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ROADSIDE SPRAYING?

#### Who is responsible for spraying the roadsides?

The spraying of public right-of-way falls under the control of the county and is carried out by the I.R.V.M. Program and it's staff, as well as the secondary roads department.

#### What types of plants are sprayed?

Noxious weeds as listed by the state and county as well as brush found within the ditch.

#### What equipment do we use to spray the roadsides?

The roadsides are spot-sprayed with a spray truck that has a boomless applicator head that doesn't overhang the ditch. If brush is small enough it will be sprayed, if it is too large for effective chemical control it will be cut and treated.

#### What chemicals are used?

A wide variety is used depending on time of year, target species to be controlled, vicinity to a watershed, and the method of application.