

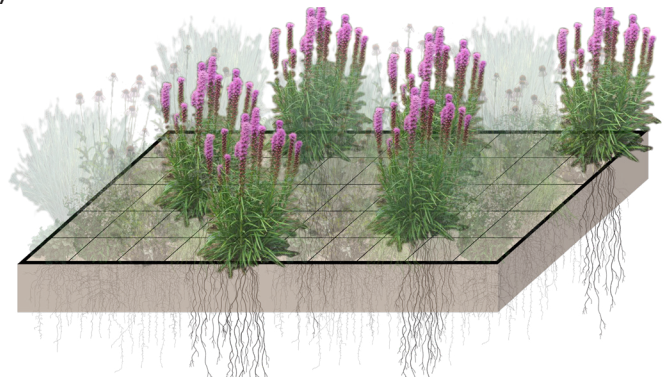
Less Weeds, More WOW

GARDEN DESIGN GUIDE

For healthy plant communities, try this four-tiered system from *Planting in a Post-Wild World* (Rainer & West).

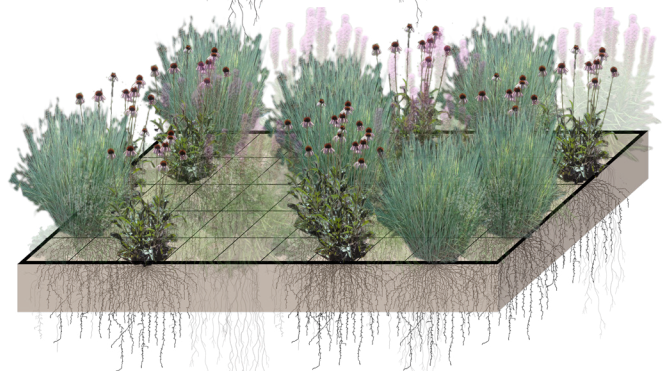
1 **Anchors** 10-15%

Tall, well-behaved, long-lived plants with year-round presence that provide a structural framework.



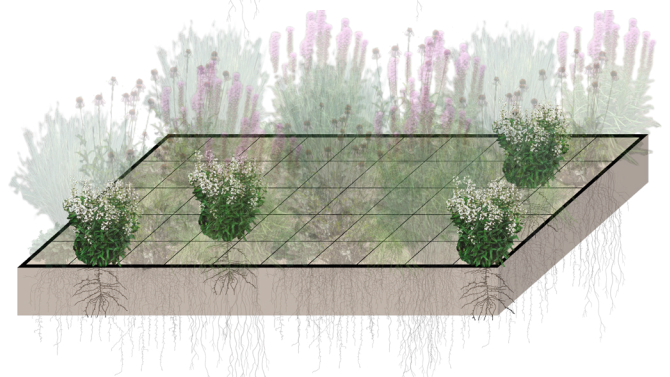
2 **Seasonal Stars** 25-40%

Mid-height plants with flowers or textures that shine for a while, then blend in.



3 **Placeholders** 5-10%

Short-lived plants that reseed to fill gaps and add brief seasonal display.



4 **Groundhuggers** 50%

Low, spreading plants that cover the ground to prevent erosion and suppress weeds.



Want more garden tips? Check out plantnebraska.org.

Beauty at eye-level, *diversity* on the ground.

This approach works by planting at least one plant per square foot. Tight spacing means faster coverage and fewer opportunities for weeds to sprout. It also works with plants' tendency to cover ground, so that we can celebrate (instead of curse) plants that spread out and pop up in new places.

By tiering plants on top of each other, we're adapting lessons from wild ecosystems to make better gardens—gardens that look good while acting as environmental workhorses. Eye-popping themes of color combine with a lush network of roots and shoots to control weeds, prevent erosion, improve water quality and provide habitat.



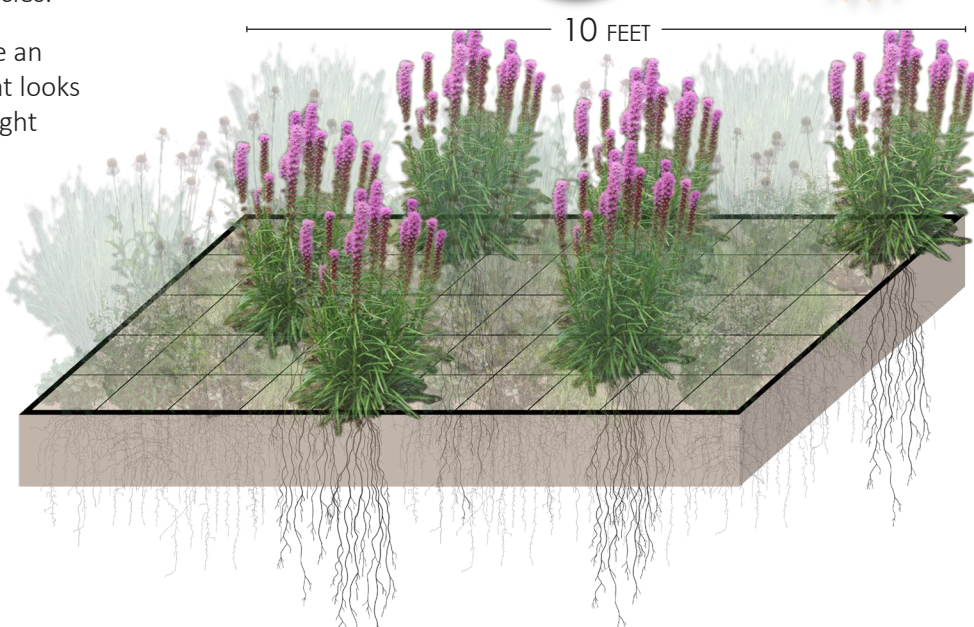
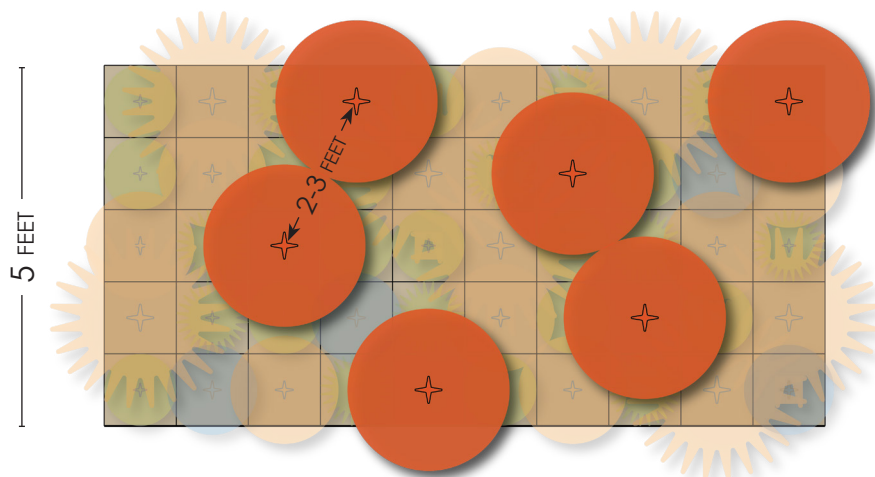
A Solid Framework

Large, long-lived plants that have distinct forms—trees, shrubs and some upright grasses and perennials—work well as Anchors. Beware of aggressive spreaders here, which can overtake a garden and increase its height to an uncomfortable level. Sometimes colonizers have cultivated varieties that aren't bullies. 'Northwind' switchgrass is a good example of one that behaves better than the straight species.

In a pasture or prairie, you might see an old plant solo or in a small group that looks consistent from year to year. This might make a good Anchor.

- arrange first
- singly or in groups
- 2-3 feet apart based on mature spread

Liatris spicata
(12%, 6/50 total plants).



Anchors to Try in Great Plains Gardens

WESTERN GRASSLANDS

Inspired by the dry, sandy plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

Shrubs	Sun
rabbitbrush (<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>)	○
mountain mahogany (<i>Cercocarpus montanus</i>)	○
shrubby cinquefoil (<i>Dasiphora fruticosa</i>)	○ ●
Apache plume (<i>Fallugia paradoxa</i>)	○ ●
western sandcherry (<i>Prunus besseyi</i>)	○
Perennials	Sun
leadplant (<i>Amorpha canescens</i> , <i>A. nana</i>)	○ ●
blue indigo (<i>Baptisia australis</i> , <i>B. minor</i>)	○ ●
blazingstar (<i>Liatris species</i>)	○
Grasses, Sedges, Rushes	Sun
giant sacaton (<i>Sporobolus wrightii</i>)	○
switchgrass (<i>Panicum cultivars</i>)	○

EASTERN GRASSLANDS

These species echo the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie and range in height from 3-8 feet. They tolerate a range in moisture but still prefer good drainage.

Shrubs	Sun
New Jersey tea (<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>)	○ ●
shrubby St. John's wort (<i>Hypericum prolificum</i>)	○ ●
Perennials	Sun
rose milkweed (<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>)	○ ●
blue indigo (<i>Baptisia australis</i> , <i>B. minor</i>)	○ ●
joe pye (<i>Eutrochium purpureum</i>)	○ ●
bluestar (<i>Amsonia hubrichtii</i> , <i>A. tabernaemontana</i>)	○ ●
blazingstar (<i>Liatris species</i>)	○ ●
ironweed (<i>Vernonia lettermanii</i>)	○ ●
Grasses, Sedges, Rushes	Sun
big bluestem (<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>)	○
switchgrass (<i>Panicum cultivars</i>)	○

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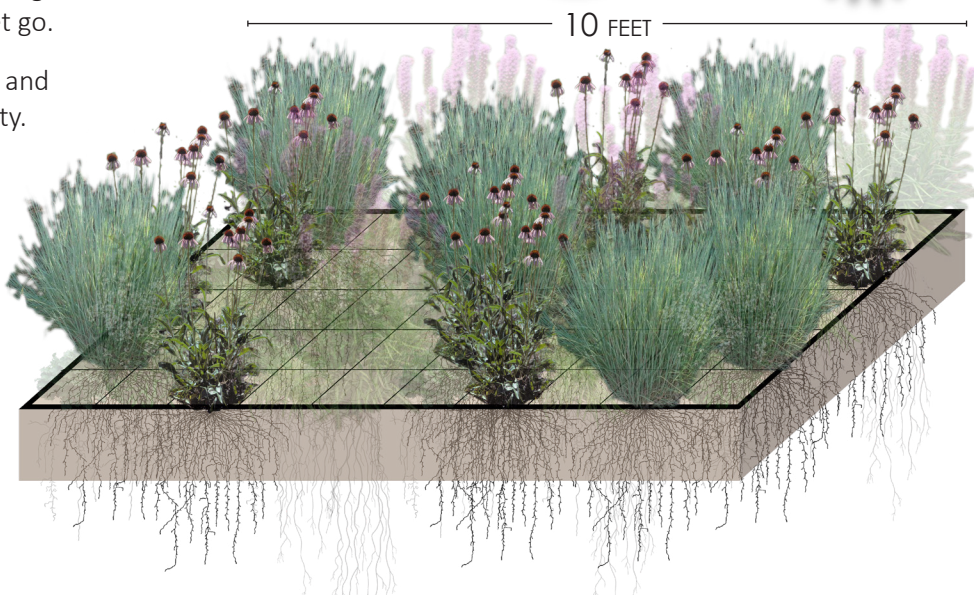
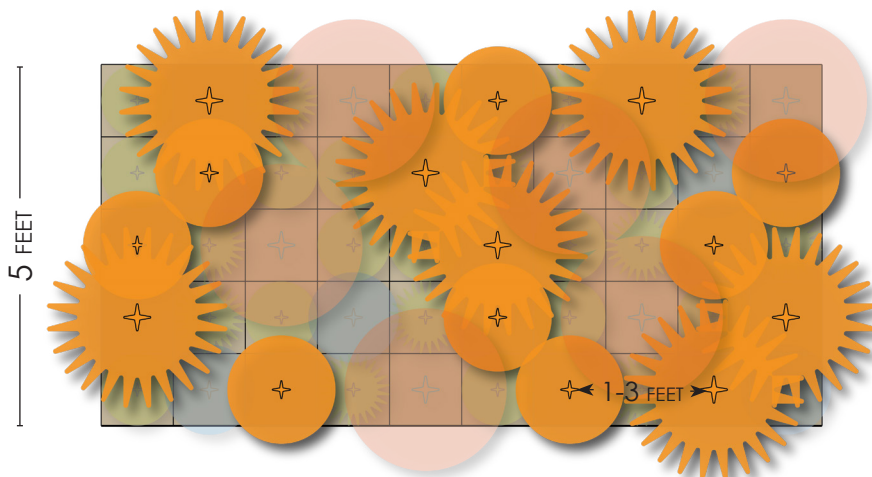
Make a Splash

Mid-height plants (1-4 feet tall) with medium lifespans (5-10 years) often make sense as Seasonal Stars because most of them have a showy attribute or two. One looking scruffy at a certain time of year can hide behind another in its peak season, so use plants with different periods of interest. Striking flowers, bold seedpods and feathery textures add to a garden's beauty; this is especially true when they appear in large drifts that catch the eye and don't let go.

Seasonal Stars can be free to spread and move—this is key for garden longevity.

- arrange second
- in groups or drifts
- 1-3 feet from other plants based on mature spread

Schizachyrium scoparium
and *Echinacea angustifolia*
(30%, 15/50 total plants).



Seasonal Stars to Try in Great Plains Gardens

WESTERN GRASSLANDS

Inspired by the dry, sandy plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

Perennials	Sun
Coronation Gold Yarrow (<i>Achillea</i> 'Cor. Gold')	○
stiff coreopsis (<i>Coreopsis palmata</i>)	○
sage (<i>Salvia nemorosa</i> , <i>S. azurea</i>)	○
goldenrod (<i>Solidago rigida</i> , 'Fireworks', <i>odora</i>)	○ ●
asters (<i>Symphyotrichum novae-angliae</i> , <i>S. oblongifolium</i> , <i>S. oolentangiense</i> , <i>S. cordifolium</i>)	○ ●
bee balm (<i>Mondarda fistulosa</i> , <i>M. didyma</i>)	○ ●
false sunflower (<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i> cultivars)	○ ●
prairie onion (<i>Allium cernuum</i>)	○ ●
Grasses, Sedges	Sun
sideoats grama (<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>)	○
prairie dropseed (<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>)	○

EASTERN GRASSLANDS

These species echo the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie and range in height from 3-8 feet. They tolerate a range in moisture but still prefer good drainage.

Perennials	Sun
bluestar (<i>Amorpha hubrichtii</i> , <i>A. illustris</i>)	○ ●
coneflower (<i>Echinacea purpurea</i> , <i>E. pallida</i>)	○
mountain mint (<i>Pycnanthemum species</i>)	○
goldenrod (<i>Solidago rigida</i> , 'Fireworks', <i>odora</i>)	○ ●
asters (<i>Symphyotrichum novae-angliae</i> , <i>S. oblongifolium</i> , <i>S. oolentangiense</i> , <i>S. cordifolium</i>)	○ ●
bee balm (<i>Mondarda fistulosa</i> , <i>M. didyma</i>)	○ ●
false sunflower (<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i> cultivars)	○ ●
lanceleaf coreopsis (<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>)	○ ●
Grasses, Sedges	Sun
Pennsylvania sedge (<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>)	○ ●
prairie dropseed (<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>)	○

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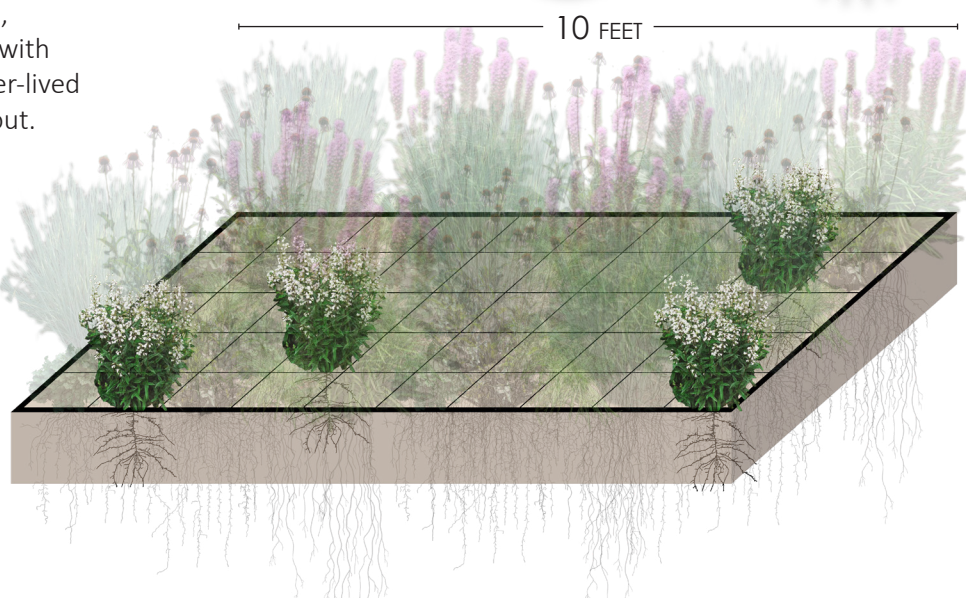
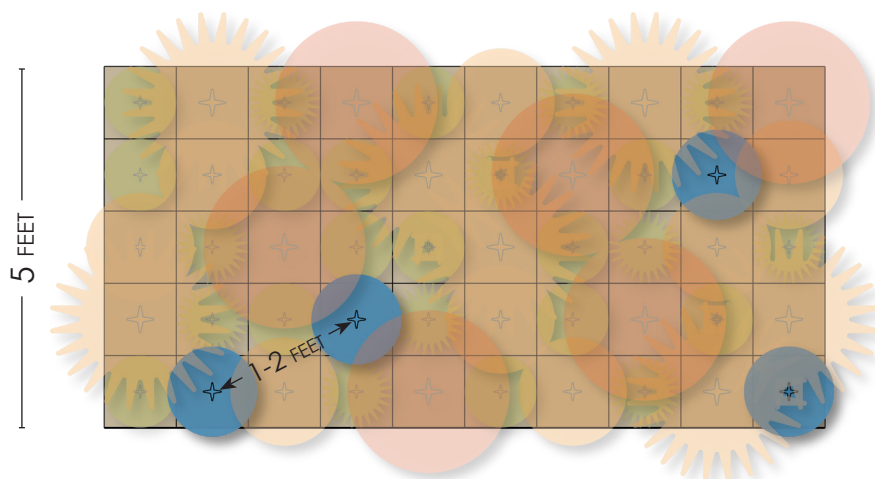
Filling Gaps

Placeholders are temporary—there when you need them, gone when you don't—which makes annuals, biennials and short-lived plants good candidates for this tier.

In the garden, Placeholders behave like most weeds would, and help cover bare spots to give other plants time to establish. In ecology, these plants are called *pioneer* and *ruderal* species, and are the first to come in after a disturbance like a fire, flood or drought. They don't do well with competition, however, so when longer-lived plants settle in, these species move out.

- arrange third
- singly or in groups
- 1-2 feet from other plants based on mature spread

Penstemon digitalis
(8%, 4/50 total plants).



Placeholders to Try in Great Plains Gardens

WESTERN GRASSLANDS

Inspired by the dry, sandy plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

Annuals, Biennials	Sun
tickseed (<i>Coreopsis tinctoria</i>)	○
sneezeweed (<i>Helenium amarum</i>)	○
scarlet gilea (<i>Ipomopsis aggregata</i>)	○
snow on the mountain (<i>Euphorbia marginata</i>)	○
greenthreads (<i>Thelesperma filifolium</i>)	○
Perennials	Sun
common yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	○ ●
hummingbird mint (<i>Agastache rupestris</i>)	○ ●
blanketflower (<i>Galilardia aristata</i>)	○
prairie flax (<i>Linum lewisii</i>)	○ ●
penstemon (<i>Penstemon species</i>)	○
Mexican hat (<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>)	○ ●

EASTERN GRASSLANDS

These species echo the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie and range in height from 3-8 feet. They tolerate a range in moisture but still prefer good drainage.

Annuals, Biennials	Sun
tickseed (<i>Coreopsis tinctoria</i>)	○
sneezeweed (<i>Helenium amarum</i>)	○
scarlet gilea (<i>Ipomopsis aggregata</i>)	○
snow on the mountain (<i>Euphorbia marginata</i>)	○
cosmos (<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>)	○
Perennials	Sun
common yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	○ ●
eastern columbine (<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>)	○ ●
blanketflower (<i>Gallardia aristata</i>)	○
prairie flax (<i>Linum lewisii</i>)	○ ●
penstemon (<i>Penstemon species</i>)	○
Mexican hat (<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>)	○ ●

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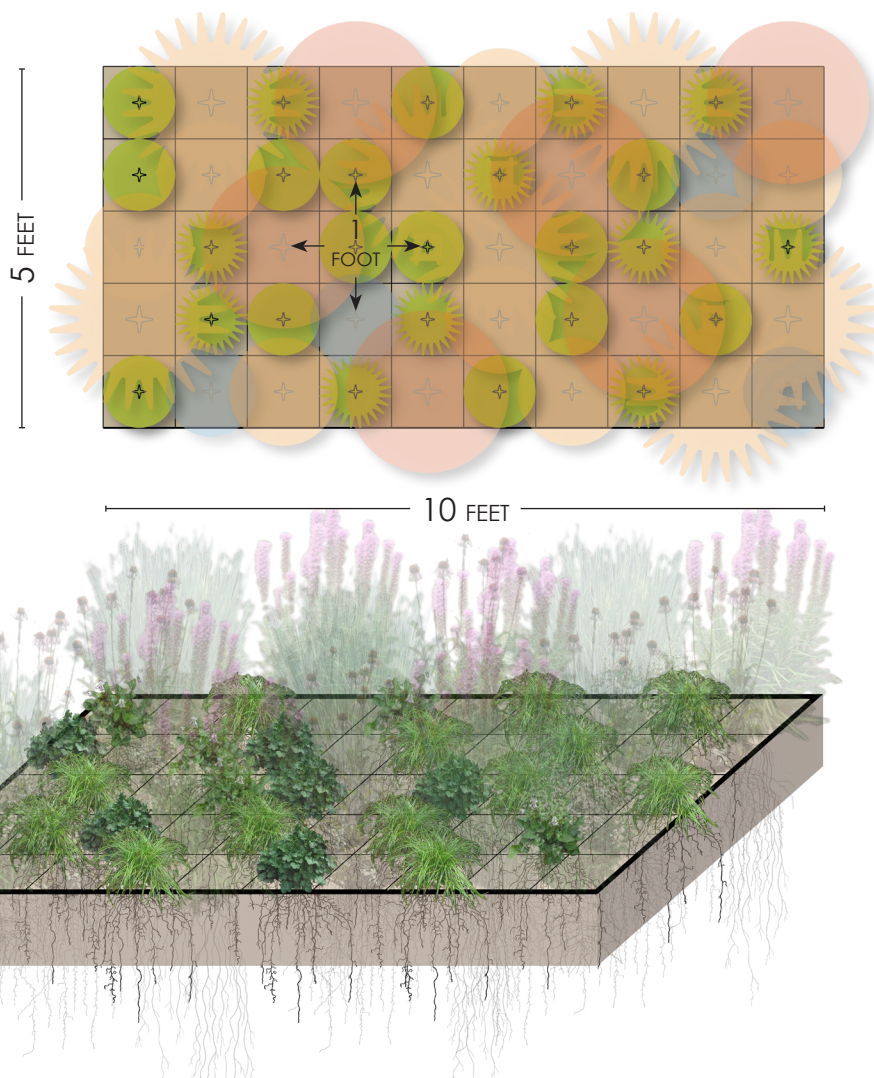
Living Mulch Network

Groundhuggers are low-growing plants that live underneath the canopy of taller plants in other tiers. This means they need to be shade- and stress-tolerant. Because their job is to cover the ground, many spreading plants perform well as Groundhuggers, but non-spreading plants work too.

While there might be few species of plants used in other tiers, here you can mix it up because Groundhuggers are mostly out of view. This presents an opportunity to increase your garden's biodiversity without compromising the look you want.

- arrange last in open spots until the garden has one plant per square foot

Carex pensylvanica, *Heuchera richardsonii* and *Viola sororia* (50%, 25/50 total plants).



Groundhuggers to Try in Great Plains Gardens

WESTERN GRASSLANDS

Inspired by the dry, sandy plains of western Nebraska, these shorter species thrive on good soil drainage and ample sunlight.

Perennials	Sun
pussytoes (<i>Antennaria parvifolia</i>)	○ ●
basket of gold (<i>Aurinia saxatilis</i>)	○ ●
poppymallow (<i>Callirhoe involucrata</i>)	○ ●
prairie smoke (<i>Geum triflorum</i>)	○ ●
primrose (<i>Oenothera macrocarpa</i>)	○ ●
pasqueflower (<i>Pulsatilla patens</i>)	○ ●
prairie petunia (<i>Ruellia humilis</i>)	○ ●
snow flurry aster (<i>Symphyotrichum 'Snow Flurry'</i>)	○ ●
Grasses, Sedges	Sun
appalachian sedge (<i>Carex appalachica</i>)	○ ●
Pennsylvania sedge (<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>)	○ ●
junegrass (<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>)	○ ●

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These species echo the openness of eastern Nebraska's tallgrass prairie and range in height from 3-8 feet. They tolerate a range in moisture but still prefer good drainage.

Perennials	Sun
basket of gold (<i>Aurinia saxatilis</i>)	○ ●
geranium (<i>Geranium 'Karmina', G. macrorrhizum</i>)	○ ●
prairie smoke (<i>Geum triflorum</i>)	○ ●
primrose (<i>Oenothera macrocarpa</i>)	○ ●
moss phlox (<i>Phlox subulata</i>)	○ ●
pasqueflower (<i>Pulsatilla patens</i>)	○ ●
snow flurry aster (<i>Symphyotrichum 'Snow Flurry'</i>)	○ ●
Grasses, Sedges	Sun
oak sedge (<i>Carex albicans</i>)	● ●
appalachian sedge (<i>Carex appalachica</i>)	● ●
Pennsylvania sedge (<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>)	○ ●
rosy sedge (<i>Carex rosea</i>)	○ ●

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