

# HOW MUCH PLANT MATERIAL DO YOU NEED?

Here's a little information and a few tips to help you determine how many plants you need for your garden project.

## Be generous with the number and diversity.

According to Douglas W. Tallamy in *Natures Best Hope, A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*. He writes that to realize the ecological potential of our landscapes, we need to be generous with the number and diversity of our native plant species.

*"The amounts and types of plants in a landscape play a crucial role in determining the abundance and diversity of animals that can live in that landscape – in other words, the carrying capacity of that landscape. If we increase the abundance of plants in the landscape, there will be more available food and shelter, and if we reduce the amount of plants, there will be less ecological interest to sustain the birds, bees, and butterflies we so enjoy. Unfortunately, if we eliminate most or all of the plants in a space, as we do every time we pave a new parking lot, build a new house, or plant a new lawn, there is no longer enough food and shelter in that space to support much of anything."*

## Tightly spacing plants reduces weeding.

One of the most common mistakes we make when using native plant material is to under plant. Using too few plants leaves bare patches of soil where other plants can take root and grow. Tightly spacing your native plants allows the plants to cover the soil surface and provide support to each other. This can significantly reduce your weeding time. It can also eliminate the need (and expense) for using mulch as a weed barrier. Plus, without mulch, your native plants can re-seed easier. You'll be building up a seed bank and encouraging a healthy, self-sustaining habitat.

## Use the 1 plant per square foot rule to get started.

Generally, you can plan on spacing your plugs between 12" and 8" apart depending on the plant density you are trying to achieve. Just remember, the farther apart, the greater the chance for weeds. To use this chart, you'll need to start with the square footage of the area you want to cover.

Space Between Plants	Spacing Multiplier (Plants per Square Foot)
4"	9
5"	5.76
6"	4
7"	2.94
8"	2.25
9"	1.78
10"	1.45
11"	1.19
12"	1
15"	0.64
18"	0.44
24"	0.25

### Example Using Plugs as Plant Material

1. Determine the size of the area you want to cover. For this example, our area is a border that's 15' by 5'.
  - a. Planting Area:  $15' \times 5' = 75 \text{ sqft}$
2. Determine density. In this example, we want a tight fit, so let's say 8" between plants. The multiplier is 2.25.
  - a.  $75 \text{ sqft} \times 2.25 = 169 \text{ plugs}$
3. We also want to see what plants on 10" spacing might look like. That multiplier is 1.45.
  - a.  $75 \text{ sqft} \times 1.45 = 109 \text{ plugs}$