



## Guide to Volunteer Organizations Organize a Seed Island and Seed Ball Workday

### **Background**

Ecological restoration is a long-term process. Improving the soil and seeding with native grasses and wildflowers are important contributions in the restoration process. Tree seedling planting and/or seed bank enrichment are crucial to restore the native plant community, especially in areas with very little growth of native seedlings. Control of exotic invasive species is also a part of this process and must be done gradually, particularly in areas with high densities of exotic invasive trees/shrubs.

After invasive plants have been eradicated from an area, one method of restoration is creating seed islands or patches of native grasses and flowers. This method involves stomping down plants in an 8x8 ft<sup>2</sup> section, covering with a layer of compost, porous ceramic, native seeds, and natural erosion fabric. The compost, low in nitrogen, will help retain water and provide nutrients to the plants. Porous ceramic is used as an additional measure to hold moisture during dry periods.

### **Your responsibilities**

- Check Event-Brite Calendar
- Submit [form](#) to [parksvolunteer@austintexas.gov](mailto:parksvolunteer@austintexas.gov) 30 days prior to event
- Conduct site visit with Watershed Protection Department and/or Park Manager
- Estimate volunteer needs (2 units minimum suggested in 2-hour shifts; 1 unit = 2 hours with 15 volunteers)
- Post volunteer opportunities and registration
- Provide group leaders
- Coordinate information/training tasks
- Confirm attendance prior to event
- Gather liability waivers
- Provide tools/supplies
- Give safety orientation; demonstrate safe use of tools

### **Volunteer info**

**Profile, age range:** Seed balls appropriate for 5+ years old, Seed islands for 10+ years old (except use of pitchfork) and mulch sock staking for 15+ (minors require adult supervision).

**Clothes and safety:** Closed toed shoes

**Supplies/Tools:** poison ivy block, gloves, steel rakes, shovels, broadfork or pitchforks, wheelbarrows, buckets, measuring tape, flags, scissors/grass shears, seed mixes, porous ceramic, erosion control blankets, stakes, clay, compost, seed ball kit- trays, spray bottles, measuring cups.

### **Project Instructions:**

#### **Seed Islands**

- Cut a ~8 X 8 ft. square of all natural coir-fiber blanket with grass shears or scissors.
- Measure a 7½ X 7½ ft. plot and mark with flags. Flatten existing plants to ground level. Pull existing Johnson grass or other invasive plants. Aerate the soil with a broadfork or pitchforks.
- Add 75 gallons (15 5-gallon buckets or 3 wheel barrows full) of manure-free compost. Add 20 lbs. of porous ceramic (12 1-liter or 1-quart containers)
- Add ~1/4 lb. (4 sandwich bags) of seed. Rake or mix lightly to make sure seeds are slightly covered with compost.

- Cover with all-natural coir-fiber blanket and staple every 2 ft. using 8” metal staples or biostakes.



### Seed balls

- Thoroughly mix dry clay (3 parts), compost (2 parts), and seed mix (1 part) specific for the light/moisture conditions of the site.
- Sprinkle with water until mixture sticks/binds together like cookie dough.
- Take a pinch of the finished mixture and roll (in the palm of your hand) into meatball-sized round balls
- ‘throw’ or spread the seed balls within the Grow Zone or add them by coir logs.



### Seeding

Seeding is done after removal of invasive plants where bare soil is exposed (refer to Johnson grass, Bamboo, Giant cane removal)

1. Rake the ground to loosen the soil.
2. Spread seeds over the soil.
3. Press the seeds in to the ground.

### **Provided by Watershed Protection Department**

Assist with initial site visit to help determine area extent, scope, and potential follow-ups of the project.