

# Mud Ball Planting

## Suggested Number of Volunteers: 1-2

## Materials in Activity Tub:

- paper bags
- seed ( $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon per mud ball is more than enough!)
- permanent marker for marking bags
- instruction sheets for participants to take home.
- stapler
- staples for stapling bags shut
- bucket and trowel for mixing mud

## Materials Provided by the Group:

- mud
- handi-whipes

## Objectives

Participants will:

1. Learn about native plants, their habitat requirements, and the importance of prairie plants for the ecosystem.

## Background:

Whether you are in a shortgrass prairie, tallgrass prairie, mixed grass prairie, or the Sandhills, prairie plants are an integral part of the environment.

Prairies are not just filled with grasses! There are two major types of plants found in prairies – grasses and forbs. Grasses typically have long, slender leaves with a straight vein pattern. Forbs usually have wider leaves and their veins are branching. Both grasses and forbs are important to maintaining a healthy, diverse prairie ecosystem. Both grasses and forbs provide the prairie ecosystem with several benefits:

- provide food for many animals - nectar for insects, seeds for birds and small mammals, leaves for larger mammals, and even food for humans;
- provide shelter and cover for some prairie animals;
- help prevent soil erosion.

## Procedure:

### *Before the Activity*

Prepare enough mud for the number of kids that may visit this station. Set-out materials in an assembly line fashion. Place items in this order: mud, seed, label and bag, place to bag mud ball, and instructions.

### *The Activity*

1. Inform participant that they will be learning about native Nebraska prairie plants and making a mud ball filled with seeds from these plants to take home.
2. Talk to participants about the importance of prairie plants (see background information).
3. Discuss what plants need to survive: water, sun, nutrients (from soil) and, space.
4. Give participants a scoop of mud and  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon of seed. No more than  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon is needed! You may need to help participants get seeds in the middle of the mud ball and work the mud into a ball.
5. Instruct participants about where they should plant their mud ball and how they should care for it.
6. Label a paper bag with the child's name; ask parents to help.
7. Place the mud ball in the child's sack and staple instructions and information about their plant to the sack.

### Prairie Mud Ball Instructions!

Allow your Prairie Mud Ball to dry for 24 hours. Then find a place that will not be mowed and has full sun to partial sun. Now, throw your mud ball! Then, let your seeds grow! Generally, rain will provide enough water for your seeds and prairie plants, but an occasional watering may be necessary in the summer.

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