

July! Summer! Heat! Mosquitoes! A rather quiet time season for programming at Bull's Run but still a wonderful time to visit and enjoy the cool shade of the trails. If you are lucky you might see one of our resident raccoons, groundhogs, or garter snakes. While walking, if you venture up the meadow trail (no shade here!) you will see the enormous effort underway to restore this sunny, flat, dry, hot, "concrete soil" area to a native plant meadow. Keep your fingers crossed because this is a big, sweaty, experiment! I've been told that, over the years this area has been used as a parking lot and a ball diamond; that attempts have been made to dig and plant; that seed has been broadcast but with little effect. So now what? I want to create a meadow of interesting and beautiful native prairie plants. To do that I have to remove unwanted plants, amend the soil, research appropriate plants, acquire those plants or seeds, get them planted, keep them watered and keep them weeded. First, several layers of newspaper were overlapped to cover and smother the existing unwanted vegetation. Then, wheelbarrow full at a time, a thick layer of old mulch was placed over the newspaper. The transplants and seeds were planted. All those little plants marked by flags have been nurtured with a lot of sweat! The big blue stem has germinated well; the Indian grass seems slower. Some of the early transplants are well established, the coreopsis and false indigo going to seed already. However, for the newest and most tender transplants, surviving the summer heat will be a challenge. Any supplemental water needs to be hand carried and each transplant given a drink. So feel free to carry a gallon of water to the meadow and quench the thirst of several young plants! The meadow is far from finished but great progress has been made in the past 2 months. I really don't know what will happen when the plant roots hit the hard pan clay beneath the mulch and newspaper, but I am hoping for the best. In 2-3 years the meadow should be glorious!

Many thanks go to Divers Garden Center for donating mulch, to Germantown and Cox metro parks for plants, seeds and encouragement, and to Dave, Jeff, Bob, Greg and Deb for their efforts and support.



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