Maintenance Schedules vs. Budget Constraints

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What are you creating?

Low maintenance

High quality natural community

Landscaping with natives
Low maintenance Areas

- NOT no maintenance
What level of maintenance required?

Some areas may need to be hand weeded and will have more labor intensive care due to their proximity to structures.

Annual or biennial mowing or will fire be an option, or a necessity.
This is a reality on any scale, planting bed up to 100’s of acres of natural communities.
What can the client handle in-house?

What equipment do they have? If they want to do all maintenance in-house, and this is their only mower, discuss the limitations. Do they have the staff w/ expertiese? Or just a weed ID guide?
What can the client handle in-house?

If this is the client’s staff that will be responsible for managing the native planting, training will be needed and most likely other options should be considered.
If maintenance will be contracted, ensure the contractors know what they are doing. Just because they have the word eco, or earth, or whatever in their company name, does not make them an expert, it may however. Get references.
All projects should come with a maintenance program in mind before any decisions are made!

If your designer or architect cannot tell you how to maintain the area after it is installed, then they probably don’t know and that should be addressed up front. Find out how to take care of it after installed, BEFORE it is accepted or installed.
Budget (or lack thereof)
Budget

- **Who Drives the Bus?**

Money will drive the project, how much to spend up front, but also how much is available for maintenance in year 1, 3, 5, 10 and so on.
Quail Ridge Park

Quail Ridge is our most developed park, meaning we have more turf than any other park, but we do have several prairies. Some with greater diversity, some for low maintenance, i.e. all grass.
Quail Ridge Park Prairie Demonstration Garden

Demo. Garden was designed to showcase species one could find in the prairie. Species are in groups and labeled accordingly.
Quail Ridge Park Prairie Demonstration Garden

Even w/simply groupings of individual species, we could not keep up with the weeds, so we enlisted an incredibly diligent group of Master Naturalist Volunteers led by Carmen Santos (left)
Case Studies

Quail Ridge Park Grassland

- Prairie recently installed across the road
- Low maintenance area
- Low diversity grassland
- Erosion was an issue
- Slides depict installation, storm event, after first season, during second season and after a burn.
- I would recommend rock check dams and soil filling the mats, they do burn and then tend to fail.
Indian Camp Creek Park

Park is mostly in natural habitat, around 90%. Low maintenance prairies, low diversity bottomland prairie, mown meadow road edges.
Indian Camp Creek Park

Mostly Indian grass and big bluestem. Some forbs were in the mix, but they rarely show up.
5-10 feet along roads are fescue, then about 20’ strip in prairie mown once a growing season then bottomland prairie
Indian Camp Creek Park

Just because it is low maintenance and mostly grass, does not mean you can’t get forbs to grow. There are some aggressive and prolific seeding forbs you can include. Sunflowers, heliopsis, coreopsis.
Case Studies

- Indian Camp Creek Park

We also try and include permanent fire lines which make installing and utilizing much easier.
We really like to incorporate trails as fire lines, they are already mown, stay green and make burning much easier.
Indian Camp Creek Park

Rain garden has been described as wild and wooly by some. It’s intention it to capture storm runoff, it is wild and wooly, like many of our wetlands.
Broemmelsiek Park

Was an old cattle farm, all fescue pasture. Which is actually easy to convert. All open areas are planned for conversion.
Case Studies

- Broemmelsiek Park

Consulted with MDC private lands for cost-share assistance.
Incorporated quail habitat into the entire project, permanent fire lines, shrub planting, prairie, located trails on firelines and between shrubs and prairie for use as bareground.
Case Studies

Broemmelsiek Park

Trails/fire lines in prairie during first season. Shrub planting along back edge, under tree canopy
Case Studies

- Broemmelsiek Park
Questions or Comment?

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