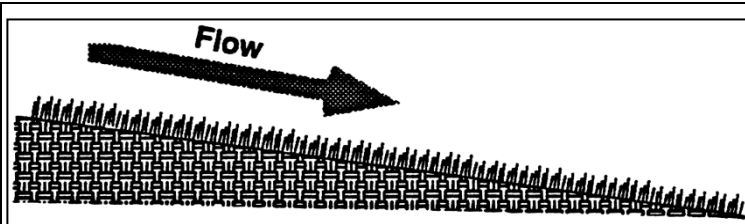


## 2.9 Vegetation

Erosion Control



**Description:** Vegetation, used as an erosion control, is the sowing or sodding of grasses, small grains, or legumes to provide temporary and final vegetative stabilization for disturbed areas.

**KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

**DESIGN CRITERIA:**

- Specify preparation of the soil surface before seeding or sodding
- Minimum of 4 to 6 inches of top soil required, depending on subsurface conditions
- Specify soil amendments depending on soil conditions
- Select seed or sod species appropriate for the climate, season, and soil

**ADVANTAGES / BENEFITS:**

- More effective and easier to maintain than sediment controls during a long construction period
- May be used for temporary or final stabilization

**DISADVANTAGES / LIMITATIONS:**

- Not appropriate for areas with heavy pedestrian, vehicular traffic, or concentrated, high velocity flow
- May require days to weeks for adequate establishment
- Alternate erosion control is needed until vegetation is established

**MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Inspect regularly
- Protect newly seeded areas from excessive runoff, high velocity flow, and traffic until vegetation is established
- Water and fertilize until vegetation is established
- Reseed and/or provide mulch or another control for bare spots
- Rake accumulations of sediment from the vegetation

**TARGETED POLLUTANTS**

- Sediment
- Nutrients & Toxic Materials
- Oil & Grease
- Floatable Materials
- Other Construction Wastes

**APPLICATIONS**

**Perimeter Control**

**Slope Protection**

**Sediment Barrier**

**Channel Protection**

**Temporary Stabilization**

**Final Stabilization**

**Waste Management**

**Housekeeping Practices**

**Fe=0.90**

*(When fully established; lower while vegetation is first growing)*

**IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

- Capital Costs
- Maintenance
- Training
- Suitability for Slopes > 5%

**Other Considerations:**

- *Design is unique to soil and other conditions at each site*
- *Watering and other maintenance required until vegetation is established*

### 2.9.1 Primary Use

Vegetation is used as a temporary or final stabilization measure for areas disturbed by construction. As a temporary control, vegetation is used to stabilize stockpiles, earthen dikes, and barren areas that are inactive for longer than two weeks. As a final control at the end of construction, grasses and other vegetation provide good protection from erosion along with some filtering for overland runoff. Subjected to acceptable runoff velocities, vegetation can provide a positive method of long-term stormwater management as well as a visual amenity to the site.

Other control measures may be required to assist during the establishment of vegetation. These other controls include erosion control blankets, mulching, swales, and dikes to direct flow around newly seeded areas and proper grading to limit runoff velocities during construction.

### 2.9.2 Applications

Vegetation effectively reduces erosion in channels and swales and on stockpiles, dikes, and mild to medium slopes. Vegetative strips can provide some protection and sediment trapping when used as a perimeter control for utility and site development construction. Refer to [Section 3.15 Vegetated Filter Strips and Buffers](#) for more information.

In many cases, the initial cost of temporary seeding may be high compared to tarps or covers for stockpiles or other barren areas subject to erosion. This initial cost should be weighed with the amount of time the area is to remain inactive, since vegetation is more effective and the maintenance cost for vegetated areas is much less than most structural controls.

### 2.9.3 Design Criteria

#### General

- Vegetation is a highly effective erosion control when the vegetation is fully established. Until then, additional controls are needed. Sediment controls should not be removed from vegetated areas until the vegetation is established.
- On grades steeper than 20:1 (5 percent), anchored mulch or erosion control blankets are required to protect seeded areas until vegetation is established. Refer to [Section 2.5 Mulching](#) and [Section 2.3 Erosion Control Blankets](#) for design criteria.
- Vegetation may be used by itself for channel protection when the channel grade is less than 2 percent and the temporary control design storm (2-year, 24-hour) and the conveyance storm (25-year, 24-hour) flow velocities are less than 6 feet per second.
- If the velocity of the temporary control design storm is greater than 2 feet per second, erosion control blankets shall be used in the channel while vegetation is being established. Turf reinforcement mats are required when the velocity exceeds 6 feet per second. Refer to [Section 2.3 Erosion Control Blankets](#) and [Section 2.8 Turf Reinforcement Mats](#) for design criteria.
- Stabilization of channels with vegetation is limited to channels that have side slopes of 3:1 or flatter.
- On cut/fill slopes and channels designed to receive temporary or final vegetation, establishment of vegetation shall be initiated immediately after completing grading of the cut/fill slope or channel, and in no case later than 14 days after completion of grading on these features. It is not acceptable to delay establishing vegetation on these highly-erodible areas until completion of construction activities and stabilization of the remainder of the site.

#### Surface Preparation

- Unless infeasible, remove and stockpile existing topsoil at the start of grading activities. Store topsoil in a series of small stockpiles instead of one large stockpile to decrease the loss of aerobic soil micro-organisms during stockpiling.

- Interim or final grading must be completed prior to seeding or sodding.
- To minimize soil compaction of areas to be vegetated, limit vehicle and equipment traffic in these areas to the minimum necessary to accomplish grading.
- Install all necessary erosion structures such as dikes, swales, diversions, etc. prior to seeding or sodding.
- Spread stockpiled topsoil evenly over the disturbed area to be vegetated.
- Depth of topsoil shall be a minimum of 4 inches, with 6 inches required where the topsoil is over rock, gravel or otherwise unsuitable material for root growth. After spreading stockpiled topsoil, provide additional top soil as needed to achieve these depths.
- Compost Manufactured Topsoil as specified in TxDOT Special Specification 1001 may be used to achieve the specified depths or when it's infeasible to stockpile topsoil. Topsoil may also be acquired from another construction site if there is no space to stockpile the topsoil at that site.
- Topsoil shall have an organic content of 10 to 20 percent using ASTM D2974 Standard Test Methods for Moisture, Ash, and Organic Matter of Peat and Other Organic Soils.
- Topsoil that does not meet the organic content requirement shall be amended with General Use Compost as specified in TxDOT Special Specification 1001. Amendment should be three parts of topsoil to one part compost by volume thoroughly blended.
- Seed bed should be well pulverized and loosened to a minimum depth of 3 inches and then raked to have a uniform surface.
- When establishing vegetation from seed, groove or furrow slopes steeper than 3:1 on the contour line before seeding.

### **Plant Selection, Fertilization and Seeding**

- Use only high quality, USDA certified seed.
- Use an appropriate species or species mixture adapted to the local climate, onsite soil conditions and the season as shown below, or consult with the local office of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) or Texas AgriLife Extension Service for selection of proper species and application technique in this area.
- Seeding rate should be in accordance with the Tables 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 as follow in this section or as recommended by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
- Chemical fertilization is not recommended at the time of seeding, because it typically stimulates and is consumed by fast growing weeds that out-compete the slower growing grasses and legumes. If the topsoil has not been amended by compost as discussed above, an 0.5 inch layer of General Use Compost (TxDOT Special Specification 1001) is recommended as a surface treatment to protect the seed and provide slow release nutrients
- Evenly apply seed using a seed drill, cultipacker, terraseeding, or hydroseeder.
- Hydro-seeding should not be used on slopes of 5:1 or steeper unless Bonded Fiber Matrix is used.
- Seeded areas shall be thoroughly watered immediately after planting. Water shall be applied at a rate that moistens the top 6 inches of soil without causing runoff. Provide water daily for the first 14 days after seeding and thereafter as needed to aid in establishment of vegetation.
- Use appropriate mulching techniques ([Section 2.5 Mulching](#)) where necessary, especially during cold periods of the year. Mulch consisting of chipped site vegetation is discouraged, since the wood content may result in depleting nitrogen from the soil.

## Sodding

- Use of sod should be limited to planned landscapes due to the relatively high water use of most types of sod grass.
- When sod is necessary to achieve immediate stabilization, buffalograss (*Buchloe dactyloides*) is recommended. Other types of sod may be used in landscaping when specified by a landscape architect for a commercial property or a homebuyer for a residential lot.
- The sod should be mowed prior to sod cutting so that the height of the grass shall not exceed 3 inches and should not be harvested or planted when its moisture condition is so excessively wet or dry that its survival shall be affected.
- Sod shall have a healthy, virile, system of dense, thickly matted roots throughout a minimum soil thickness of 0.75 inch.
- Sod shall be planted within 3 days after it is excavated.
- In areas subject to direct sunlight, pre-moisten prepared sod bed by watering immediately prior to placing sod.
- Sodded areas shall be thoroughly watered immediately after they are planted.

## Temporary Vegetation

The following table lists recommended plant species for the North Central Texas region depending on the season for planting.

<b>Season</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Pure Live Seed Rate (Lbs/Acre)</b>
Sep 1 - Nov 30	Tall Fescue	4.5
	Western Wheat Grass	5.6
	Wheat (Red, Winter)	34.0
May 1 - Aug 31	Foxtail Millet	34.0
Feb 15 – May 31 Sep 1 – Dec 31	Annual Rye	20.0

Areas receiving temporary seeding and vegetation shall be landscaped, re-seeded or sodded with perennial species to establish final vegetation at the end of construction.

## Vegetation for Final Stabilization

Sodding or seeding may be used to establish vegetation for final stabilization of areas disturbed by construction activity. The vegetation must achieve a cover that is 70 percent of the native background vegetative cover to be considered final stabilization. Sod will achieve this coverage quicker than seeding; however, sod is usually more expensive than seeding. Sod is most cost-effective for small areas or areas of concentrated flow or heavy pedestrian traffic where it will be difficult to establish vegetation by seeding.

Grass seed for establishing final stabilization can be sown at the same time as seeding for temporary (annual) vegetation. Drought tolerant native vegetation is recommended rather than exotics as a long-term water conservation measure. Native grasses can be planted as seed or placed as sod. Buffalo 609, for example, is a hybrid grass that is placed as sod. Fertilizers are not normally used to establish native grasses, but mulching is effective in retaining soil moisture for the native plants.

County	Planting Date	Clay Soils		Sandy Soils	
		Species and Pure Live Seed Rate (Lbs/Acre)		Species and Pure Live Seed Rate (Lbs/Acre)	
Erath Hood Johnson Palo Pinto Parker Somervell Tarrant Wise	February 1 – May 15	Green Sprangletop Sideoats Grama (El Reno) Bermudagrass Little Bluestem (Native) Blue Grama (Hachita) Illinois Bundleflower	0.3 2.7 0.9 1.0 0.9 1.0	Green Sprangletop Sand Lovegrass Bermudagrass Weeping Lovegrass (Ermelo) Sand Dropseed Partridge Peal	0.3 0.5 1.8 0.8 0.4 1.0
Collin Dallas Denton Ellis Kaufman Navarro Rockwell	February 1 – May 15	Green Sprangletop Bermudagrass Sideoats Grama (El Reno) Little Bluestem (Native) Buffalograss (Texoka) Illinois Bundleflower	0.3 1.2 2.7 2.0 1.6 1.0	Green Sprangletop Bermudagrass Weeping Lovegrass (Ermelo) Sand Lovegrass Sand Dropseed Partridge Pea	0.3 1.8 0.6 0.6 0.4 1.0
Hunt	February 1 – May 15	Green Sprangletop Sideoats Grama (El Reno) Bermudagrass Little Bluestem (Native) Illinois Bundleflower	0.3 3.2 1.8 1.7 1.0	Green Sprangletop Bermudagrass Bahagrass (Pensacola) Sand Lovegrass Weeping Lovegrass (Ermelo) Partridge Pea	0.3 1.5 6.0 0.6 0.8 1.0

(Source: TxDOT Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Highways, Streets and Bridges, Item 164)

County	Planting Date	Clay Soils		Sandy Soils	
		Species and Pure Live Seed Rate (Lbs/Acre)		Species and Pure Live Seed Rate (Lbs/Acre)	
Erath Hood Johnson Palo Pinto Parker Somervell Tarrant Wise	February 1 – May 15	Green Sprangletop Sideoats Grama (El Reno) Bermudagrass Buffalograss (Texoka)	0.3 3.6 2.4 1.6	Green Sprangletop Sideoats Grama (El Reno) Bermudagrass Sand Dropseed	0.3 3.6 2.1 0.3
Collin Dallas Denton Ellis Kaufman Navarro Rockwell	February 1 – May 15	Green Sprangletop Sideoats Grama (El Reno) Buffalograss (Texoka) Bermudagrass	0.3 3.6 1.6 2.4	Green Sprangletop Buffalograss (Texoka) Bermudagrass Sand Dropseed	0.3 1.6 3.6 0.4
Hunt	February 1 – May 15	Green Sprangletop Bermudagrass Sideoats Grama (Haskell)	0.3 2.4 4.5	Green Sprangletop Bermudagrass	0.3 5.4

(Source: TxDOT Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Highways, Streets and Bridges, Item 164)

Vegetation for final stabilization of channels requires grasses that are tolerant of periodic inundation, such as Bermuda grass, Kentucky bluegrass or a grass-legume mixture.

## Additional Considerations

- Conditions for establishing vegetation vary significantly from site to site. Therefore, specifics of the vegetation design should be prepared based on the soil, slopes, drainage patterns, and the purpose of the vegetation at a each site.
- For construction activities that include landscaping in the development plans, the landscape architect should be consulted when specifying vegetation for temporary or final stabilization of disturbed areas.
- Vegetation is easier to establish if equipment and vehicle traffic is managed onsite to minimize soil compaction by traffic in the disturbed area that will be vegetated.
- Establishing a good vegetative cover is dependent on the season of the year. Projects that commence in the fall of the year may not be candidates for using vegetation as an erosion control.
- Where vegetation is used in swales and channels it may be necessary to use sod, rather than seeding, to establish an erosion resistant surface that accommodates rainfall runoff flows.
- Mulch should be used to enhance vegetative growth, in that mulch protects seeds from heat, prevents soil moisture loss, and provides erosion protection until the vegetation is established. Compost mulch has the additional benefit of providing some slow-release nutrients.
- Fertilizers have both beneficial and adverse effects. Fertilizers provide nutrients to the vegetation, but fertilizers are also a source of unwanted nutrients in streams and lakes. In this latter regard, they are a pollutant. The use of native vegetation rather than exotics reduces the need for fertilizers. Organic fertilizers, such as compost mulch, are generally preferred over chemical fertilizers. They provide a slow release of nutrients over a longer period of time and are less likely to cause environmental problems.
- Steep slopes represent a problem for establishing vegetation. Hydraulic mulches are useful for establishing vegetation on slopes. Refer to [Section 2.5 Mulching](#).

### 2.9.4 Design Guidance and Specifications

Additional criteria for the application of vegetation in channels are in [Section 3.6.3 of the iSWM Criteria Manual](#) and design guidance is in [Section 3.2 of the Hydraulics Technical Manual](#).

Specifications for construction of this item may be found in the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction – North Central Texas Council of Governments, Item 202 Landscaping. Additional specifications for the following components of this item are in the Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Highways, Streets, and Bridges (TxDOT 2004):

- Topsoil, Item 160.
- Compost, Item 161.
- Sodding for Erosion Control, Item 162.
- Seeding for Erosion Control, Item 163.
- Fertilization, Item 164.
- Vegetative Watering 165.

### 2.9.5 Inspection and Maintenance Requirements

Protect newly seeded areas from excessive runoff and traffic until vegetation is established. Include a watering and fertilizing schedule in the iSWM Construction Plan facilitate the establishment of the vegetation. Vegetation for final stabilization must be maintained until the vegetative cover is 70 percent of the native background vegetative cover.

Vegetation should be inspected regularly (at least as often as required by the TPDES Construction General Permit) to ensure that the plant material is established properly and remains healthy. Bare spots shall be reseeded and/or protected from erosion by mulch or other measures. Accumulated sediment

deposited by runoff should be removed to prevent smothering of the vegetation. In addition, determine the source of excess sediment and implement appropriate measures to control the erosion.