Step by Step Soil Prep and Planting Guide

March/ April

1) Lay out the border of your garden area with a string / rope/ hose and then mark it with landscape chalk.

2) Cover the area with cardboard /black plastic or a tarp to start killing the grass. This will make turf removal easier next month. This step is optional but will make grass removal easier

4) Order plants and plugs from online sources. Locally, native plants are generally available in late April and May.

April/ May

1) In mid to late April take a sharp spade and "scalp" the turf off of your area. This can be composted.

2) Next, dig down approximately 8' and remove weeds.

3) Add organic compost, working this into the top few inches of newly tilled soil. You don't need much, approximately 1"- 2". Clay soil requires less compost than sandy soil.

If you are planting within the next few days this is your last prep step. If planting later you want to cover the area with a tarp to prevent weed seeds from establishing.

May- mid June

Plant the plants level with the soil, don't plant too deeply or too shallow. **Water well.**

Put a **shallow** layer of fine to medium mulch 1'-1.5" (no artificial dyes or cedar) on your garden after watering in the plants. Keep mulch away from plant stems and don't overdo it. If you have a serious weed problem you can put overlapping pieces of cardboard between your plants and then put mulch on top to suppress weeds.

Establish a clear maintenance plan for watering and weeding post planting. **Native plants are low maintenance but all newly planted plants require consistent watering (1" of water per week) the first season or two if rainfall is sparse**. Doing a bi-weekly visual check and pulling weeds will prevent weeds from becoming established. **Do not use chemical pesticides or herbicides!** There are lots of eco-friendly alternatives. http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/WI_KAlternativP.pdf

Fall and Winter Gardens are alive year round! Leave fallen leaves and perennial plant stalks standing in your garden beds. This creates winter habitat for pollinators and food sources for birds. Excess leaves on the lawn areas can be moved to a leaf pile or mulch mowed rather than blown. You'll get free mulch and improve your soil's health as you create winter habitat that allows pollinators to complete their life cycle. Baby birds can only eat caterpillars, no caterpillars, no baby birds. Fallen leaves shelter the caterpillars that baby birds need to survive. Please leave fallen leaves and grasses wherever possible.

Spring Wait until temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees for a week straight before doing any garden cleanup. (usually mid to late April). This allows overwintering pollinators to emerge.