

# Planting sea oats for dune restoration



Sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*) play a major role in stabilizing and building dunes. As sea oats are protected by law, plants may not be collected and transplanted; rather, seedlings must be obtained from licensed growers. It will take about 64 seedlings to plant an area of dune that is 10' x 10' in area. Best planting times in north Florida are between April and October.

In order to maximize success of the planted seedlings, the area should be marked off and signs should be posted to inform the public about the replanting project. If people walk over the young plants, the plants' survival will be greatly reduced.

## **Supplies needed:**

Tape measure (preferably 100' or more)

Wooden or PVC stakes (approx. 4' long) for marking off planting area

Flagging tape (optional)

Spray paint or small stakes (approx. 1' long)

Yard sticks, tape measures or pieces of flagging tape cut to 18" lengths

Shovels (narrow digging spades are best)/hand trowels/post-hole diggers

Time-release fertilizer (e.g. 8-8-8 or 14-14-14)

Plastic spoons

Sea oats seedlings (approx. 64 for a 10' x 10' area; 56 for additional 10' x 10' areas)

Water-absorbing polymer, water and buckets (optional). If using, mix polymer and water about 30-60 minutes before needed.

## Steps for planting:

1. Select the area to be planted and rope off three sides (along the top of the dune and down two sides, leaving the beach front accessible).
2. Run a tape measure along the top edge of the dune and mark off a point every 18". This can be done by using spray paint, sticks or other markers.
3. Use shovels or other digging tools to dig a hole 8-12" deep at each marked point. Holes need only be a few inches in diameter.
4. If using polymer, add 1 cup to the bottom of each hole
5. Place one sea oat seedling in each hole, making sure that the top of the root ball is at least 4" below the surface of the sand. Fill in the hole around the seedling with sand.
6. Sprinkle one teaspoon of time-release fertilizer around the base of each plant. Work the fertilizer into the sand with the spoon or your fingers.
7. Repeat steps 2-5 for additional rows of sea oats, making sure that each row is staggered and 18" apart. This can be accomplished using the long tape measure or by giving each person an 18" long piece of wood or flagging tape so that they can measure 18" from the newly planted sea oats. Do not plant sea oats below the high tide mark as the plants will get washed away.
8. Plants should be watered immediately following planting, then again weekly for the first few months. Fertilizer should be applied at the rate of 150 lbs nitrogen per acre 2-3 times, 4-6 weeks apart.

