United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Critical Area Planting (342)

Critical area planting establishes permanent vegetation on sites that have, or are expected to have, high erosion rates, and on sites that have conditions that prevent the establishment of vegetation with normal practices.

Practice Information

Erosion control is the primary consideration for plant material selection. However, a broad choice of grass, trees, shrubs, and vines are usually available and adapted for most sites. Wildlife and beautification are additional considerations that influence planning decisions on a site needing this practice.

Conservation benefits may include, but are not limited to:

- reduced sheet and rill erosion
- reduced transport of sediment
- stabilized slopes, road banks, stream banks, shorelines, sand dunes

The following decisions must be made when planning this practice:

- species of plants to establish
- methods and rates of planting
- fertilizer and soil amendments necessary for establishment and growth
- mulching requirements
- planting site preparation
- irrigation requirement
- site management following establishment of the vegetation

Common Associated Practices

Installation of practices such as Diversion (362), Obstruction Removal (500), Subsurface Drain (606), or Underground Outlet (620) may be necessary to prepare the area or ensure vegetative establishment.

Critical Area Planting (342) is commonly applied with practices such as Mulching (484), Nutrient Management (590), and Herbaceous Weed Control (315).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.