

# Create a Wildflower Meadow



A “wildflower meadow” (photo1) is a perennial native mixture of flowers and grasses.

“Cornfield areas” (photo2 ) are mixtures of annual corn field plants, not to be confused with native wildflower meadows.

## Two ways to create a meadow:

### • Convert an existing lawn

Simply let existing grass grow long and see what flowers are present.

Remove turf in patches and add plug plants in groups of 5-10/m<sup>2</sup>. Keep the plants weeded and watered till established. Yellow rattle parasites on grass and is a useful flower to have in your meadow. It can successfully be sown in the autumn on patches of bare soil in amongst the grasses.

### • Create a meadow from scratch

#### STEP 1: Preparation of site

Perennial wildflower meadow mixes are most suitable for poor soils, light subsoils, grits, gravels and limey soils.

Remove turf and fertile top soil, 5-10cm depth.

Dig out the roots of perennial weeds such as dandelions, thistles, nettles, bind weed and dock carefully. It's important to sort out the weed problem before sowing. Let the weeds have time to emerge on your newly prepared patch before you sow the seeds. You may need to spend a season clearing the ground of all weeds before sowing.

Rake over the soil and create a seed bed. Make sure it is firm by walking over it or rolling.

#### STEP 2: Sowing

- Mix seed with light coloured sand and sow by walking up and down it scattering seeds as you go.
- Walk over again to ensure seeds are in good contact with soil.
- Don't cover with soil. Most wildflower seeds germinate better when exposed to light.

It is not necessary to add grasses to a wildflower mix. They will arrive naturally anyway and the flowers will get a head start without the competition from grasses in the early years.

If you want to sow a grass/flower mix, avoid including vigorous grasses such as rye-grass. Fine grasses such as bents and fescues are more suitable.

Try and obtain as local meadow seeds as possible. Contact the Wildlife Trust or BSBI local recorder for more information on local seed availability.

#### DON'TS:

**Don't** sow seeds into an existing area of grass or weeds.

**Don't** sow wild flower seeds in heavy shade such as below conifers.

**Don't** cover the seeds.



Photo 1



Photo 2



Yellow rattle



## Timing

Meadows can be sown in spring (March-April) or autumn (Sept-Nov). Autumn sowing can be advantageous for certain species that germinate better after freezing weather (hay rattle, cowslips, primroses). However, these will emerge in subsequent years if sown in spring. An autumn sown area needs to be protected from people and dogs and may be difficult in public spaces

## Choice of seed mix

Consider soil type (sandy/heavy, acid/neutral/chalky) and location of meadow (shady/sunny).

## Types of flowers

### For Perennial Wildflower Meadows:

Knapweed, field scabious, meadow buttercup, lady's bedstraw, bird's foot trefoil, ribwort plantain, meadow cranesbill, yellow rattle, vetches, yarrow, selfheal, musk mallow, ox-eye daisy, betony, red campion, St John's wort, wild carrot, cowslip, primrose.

! Do not expect to see flowers in the first year – most perennials need to grow for at least 2 years before they are mature enough to flower.

### For Annual Cornfield Areas:

Corncockle, Cornflower, Corn marigold, Corn chamomile, Corn poppy.

## Management

In year 1 maintenance, carefully water in early stages. Keep an eye on it, remove weeds and rough grasses.

### Perennial meadows

For spring flowering meadows with cowslips, lady's smock, fritillaries, etc:

- Leave to grow and flower from March to late June/July.
- Cut in July and always remove hay.
- Cut occasionally till October or simply one final cut in October.

For summer flowering meadows with knapweed, field scabious, meadow buttercup etc:

Cut occasionally in spring until late April and then leave to flower and set seeds.

- Cut in late August/ Sept and remove hay.
- Final cut in October, not too short. Leave 6" stubble.

### Annual corn field areas

- Leave until September.
- Remove any perennial weeds such as nettles, thistles, docks.
- Pull out all dead flower stalks. Rake soil, create seed bed.
- Shake out seeds on the bare soil.
- Don't cover with soil; simply walk on the soil to push seeds in.

## Grazing

Consider grazing with sheep, goats or ponies or cattle if you have a large meadow. They help create varying heights of vegetation which is better for wildlife. After cutting, graze lightly from September to November; follow up with a light spring graze in March to the end of April. From End of April to August leave ungrazed. Animal dung is good for beetles and other invertebrates.



Meadow sown from scratch



Corn flower with red tailed bumblebee



Bird's foot trefoil



Yarrow



Lady's smock/ Cuckoo flower