



**friends of
the earth**
Pembroke

Creating a wildflower meadow

Establishing a beautiful wild flower rich area of grassland is not easy and it may require a lot of work in the early stages but once established you will be rewarded by

- Creating a food source for bees and other pollinators.
- Creating a habitat for a wide variety of wildlife including insects, amphibians and small mammals.
- Less time spent mowing the lawn.
- A beautiful display of wildflowers.

Choosing your site

The size of the area is not important, what is needed is an open sunny patch of ground with low fertility. This might be a patch of lawn, an existing grassy area or a patch of open ground.

Reducing the Fertility

This can be done in a number of ways

- In an existing lawn for the first year, or even two, before starting to create your meadow, stop feeding and spraying, and continue to cut the lawn weekly removing the clippings.
- Remove the turf with the top 5cm of top soil, and sow on the subsoil. This is particularly useful for smaller areas.
- For larger areas you can sow the prepared area with oil seed rape or mustard clearing the crop at flowering time, and then sowing the wild flower mix in the autumn.
- You can incorporate cornflower annuals with your seed. These will flower in the first year reducing fertility, suppressing weeds and of course they can look spectacular.

Remember nettles are a sign of high fertility and such a site may not be suitable for a wildflower meadow, try cornfield annuals instead.

Preparing the Ground

Rake cleared ground to create a seed bed. Ideally leave this for 3-4 weeks and then remove the weeds which come up, before seeding.

For existing lawns, cut them short and rake them thoroughly in the autumn, over seed any bare areas, and sow yellow rattle.

Yellow Rattle is semi-parasitic on grass and so helps to reduce the vigour of the grasses which will out compete the wild flowers. It is an annual so must be allowed to set and drop its seed every year. This generally has happened by mid July.



Sowing and planting

For the best results

- Choose a mix which is suitable for you site.
- Sow at the recommended rates. It is often easier to sow evenly if mixed with silver sand.
- Always use seed sourced from Reputable UK sources. www.floralocale.org is a useful website for locating suppliers and other information.
- If you don't buy a prepared mix avoid rye-grass, a mixture of bents and fescues works best, include yellow rattle and select flowers which are suitable for your particular site.
- Lightly rake and roll the area after seeding

In existing lawns, it is better to raise plants from seed, or buy plug plants, and the plant these out in small groups.

If you have not sown cornflower annuals, it is best to continue to mow the area every 6-8 weeks in the first year. Roll the ground before the first cut to firm in the seedlings.

Aftercare

The key to the continued success of you area is mowing, which is done twice a year.

The area must be mowed in summer after all the flowers have seeded, August/ September. (Remember you are in effect making hay.) The grass is cut, it can be left to 'dry' and then cleared from the site.

The grass is then cut again at the end of the winter (February/March) to knock back the vigorous grasses and weeds which have grown up over the winter and to remove any old growth.

In large areas it is good to leave some areas uncut; the best way of doing this is to leave a 3-4 metre margin uncut on one side. Rotating to each side over 4 years.

If you are grazing the area it should be grazed in September to November and again March to April depending on the weather.

In small gardens the long grass can look untidy and neglected. This can be combated by mowing paths and edges around the site.

