

How to Create a Wild Flower Meadow

Meadow seed and grass mix can be sown at any time of year, but for best results sow in the autumn. Some seeds, for example - Yellow Rattle - will need a period of cold weather before they will germinate (stratification). If seed is sown in the spring or summer the remaining rattle seed will germinate the following spring after stratification.

Site preparation - Make sure you are not destroying an area already rich in biodiversity. If the area is already grassed there are two possible methods. **If the grasses are fine-leaved, short (up to 70cm including seed head) and include lawn grass or species such as those below, then the grass can be kept:**

Meadow Foxtail	Chewings Fescue
Common Bent	Sheep's Fescue
Crested Dogstail	Slender CRF
Sweet Vernal Grass	Yorkshire Fog

Just sow a wildflower meadow and low maintenance grass mixture or 100% wildflower meadow seed into the existing grass – see below. But if the grasses present are tall, wide-leaved, clump-forming or form a thick, dense thatch, e.g. couch grass or rye grass, the turf should be sprayed or stripped off and seed sown into bare soil.

How to add flowers to existing grassland - The turf should be roughened with a rake to create pockets of bare soil, and then sowed at 1-2g/m² with the **PFS9 – Country Meadow Wildflower Seed Mix** or 5g/m² with 100% native wildflower meadow seed for example: **Cornfield Annuals Wildflower Seed Mix**. **Do not cover or bury the seed.** Smaller areas may be planted with 5 wildflower plug plants per m². The maintenance regime below will prevent the grasses from becoming too dominant.

How to sow into the bare ground - Cultivate the soil to a firm, fine seed bed. For best results do this some weeks before sowing meadow seed. Weed seeds which germinate in the seed bed may be hoed out just before sowing. Sow seed at 5g/m². You can mix the seed with fine sand or sawdust to make sowing easier and more even. Firm the soil by rolling or treading but do not cover or bury the seed. Water in dry periods.

Maintenance programme - The first growing season is all about weed and grass management with few flowers. Mow the area every 8-10 weeks from May to October, with the mower on its highest setting, to prevent the grasses from out-competing the wild flowers and to prevent annual weeds from flowering. Remove all cuttings. Weed out or spot-treat any perennial weeds that appear.

In following years cut the meadow in February/March then leave it to grow up, flower and set seed. Cut the hay in July/August after all the plants have shed their seed. Remove all cuttings to gradually reduce the soil fertility. Regrowth may be mown a couple of times during the autumn and winter to prevent the grasses from becoming too dominant. Seed of yellow rattle may have to be reintroduced in year 2 or 3. As an annual plant it may be lost if it fails to establish and seed in year 1 or 2.

Please be patient. Creating a beautiful meadow will take 3-5 years. A well-managed meadow will go on improving over 15-20 years. Please contact us if you need any further help and advice about your meadow.