**Sowing Wildflowers - STARTING FROM SCRATCH**

*1* ***Remove the topsoil***

An ideal time to do this is in July. Wild flowers thrive on nutrient-poor soil, so remove your turf and five centimetres of topsoil. You will need a strong spade and lots of energy, but it is worth it. Not only will this reduce nutrient levels, it is a good opportunity to get rid of weed roots. Once you have removed the topsoil, rake over the ground until you have a fine tilth.

*2* ***Remove the competition***

Leave the area for three to four weeks. It is likely that a spread of garden “weeds” may appear, so to ensure the wildflower seed will have a good start, weeding may be needed.

*3* ***Sowing the seed***

For best results do this towards the end of August. You only need one or two teaspoonfuls of seed per square metre, which should be sown on a day with no wind. Buy from a local supplier that provides seed from native British plants, as this will ensure that your flowers will grow happily and be suitable for local wildlife.

*4* ***Adding annuals***

Cornfield flower seeds, such as poppies and cornflowers, will give you brilliant colour in the first year while the perennial meadow plants are getting established. They can also help to smother any unwanted “weeds”. Make sure you have some Yellow Rattle seed (see varieties, right), a pretty wild flower in its own right, as this semi-parasitic plant will limit the growth of competing grasses.

*5* ***Mowing is the key***

Mow your meadow area at the end of winter to remove any old growth before spring. Then leave it untouched through spring and summer, to allow your wild flowers to grow to their full height. When the flowers are no longer looking their best and have set seed in late summer, give it a thorough mow. Remove the cuttings, otherwise you may be adding unwanted nutrients.

**FROM LAWN TO MEADOW**

*1* ***Good lawn, bad lawn***

The older and “weedier” your lawn, the better. If your lawn is like a bowling green, with fertile soil and no weeds, try to lower the nutrients in the soil by mowing regularly and removing the cuttings. It will take a year or two to get it down to the right nutrient level for wild flowers to thrive.

*2* ***Adding wild flowers***

Step 1 will create the right habitat for your plants. You can then add a selection of pot-grown wild flowers or seed. If you prefer seed, cut your lawn very short in the autumn and scarify it with a rake, creating patches of bare soil onto which you can scatter your seed. However, a more successful way is to grow your plants from seed in pots. Sow the seed in autumn and leave the pots outside over winter, as many wild flowers need a cold spell before they can germinate.

Transplant your seedlings into individual pots when they have three or four leaves and concentrate the growth on getting healthy roots by cutting off any flower stems. You can then plant them out into your lawn in the spring.

*3* ***Keep up the mowing***

See step 5, above

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