

fine grass species. Most of the seed companies have specific mixes for wildflower meadows but you may like to tailor a mix to your own preference. There is no harm in including some cornfield annual species as these will provide a good show of colour for the first few years while your meadow becomes established.

Now sow your mix at 3-4 grams per square metre. August – September is the best time to sow, failing that then March-April. If the weather is dry, you will need to water with a fine spray.

The mowing of your meadow in the first year is critical. Once the seeds have germinated and are well established (6-8 weeks) cut your wildflower meadow with the blades set high. Repeat this process every six to eight weeks during the growing season of the first year to prevent the grasses from dominating the sward and to encourage root growth. After the first year, you can experiment when you cut. Cut late (July – August) if you have a summer flowering mix and remember to remove cuttings from the meadow to your compost heap as this will prevent nutrients building up in the soil.

WILDLIFE LAW AND YOU!!!

Some plants are specially protected under Northern Ireland Law. It is illegal, unless you have a licence, to intentionally pick, uproot or destroy any of these specially protected wild plants or even collect their flowers or seeds. It is also illegal to uproot any wild plant unless it is on your land or you have permission. If you need wildflower seeds or plants, then contact a recommended seed stockist – see below. For more information on wildlife law contact the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) at the address below.

GLOSSARY

SILAGE is grass cut during the summer and then stored under more or less airtight conditions. The resulting fodder is fed to cattle in the winter months. Silage production has largely replaced hay making. Silage swards are usually heavily fertilised and have only one or two grass species. **HERBICIDES** are chemicals usually sprayed onto fields to kill unwanted plant species or weeds. Weeds can be poisonous to cattle and can reduce yields of grass or cereal.

SEED STOCKISTS

Coburns
13 Scarva Street
Banbridge
Co Down
BT32 3DD

Sawyers Seeds
Little Cornard
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 0NY

John Chambers
15 Westleigh Road
Barton Seagrave
Kettering, Northants
NN15 5AJ

Emorsgate Seeds
Terrington Court
Popes Lane
Terrington St Clement
Kings Lynn, Norfolk
PE34 4NT

FOR FURTHER READING

Creating a Wildlife Garden - Bob and Liz Gibbons. 1992. Hamlyn.

How to Make a Wildlife Garden - Chris Baines. 1985. Elm Tree Books.

Wildlife Gardening - Fran Hill. 1988. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

Wildflower Gardening - Michael Jefferson-Brown. 1992. Cassell.

The National Trust Book of Wildflower Gardening John Stevens. 1987. Dorling Kindersley.

Gardening for Wildlife – 1999. Ulster Wildlife Trust.

The Wildlife Law And You – DOE (NI) 1985 HMSO.

The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 – HMSO.



PRIMROSES

Our aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural and built environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Belfast BT7 2JA
T. 0845 302 0008

www.ni-environment.gov.uk

WILDLIFE GARDENING

(2009)

WG 002

INTRODUCTION

Probably one of the most attractive addition to any garden is a meadow area. A meadow area can be anything from a small grassy area allowed to grow in the spring with flowering bulbs to a complete lawn converted to a splendid wildflower meadow with a plethora of bright colours in the summer. This fact sheet will give you some information about meadows; their history, how they are threatened and how you can make one in YOUR GARDEN.

TRADITIONALLY meadows are areas of farmed land that is partially grazed or where a hay crop is cut in late summer. These fields at the height of summer have a multitude of flowering buttercups, daisies and grasses. Some of the best examples often contain 20 – 30 species per square metre and may include orchids and other rare plants.

DECLINE

Many of the typical meadow species are in decline. Silage production has largely replaced hay making in the countryside and so many of the plant species typical of hay meadows have been lost. Improved seed cleaning techniques and use of efficient herbicides have resulted in the almost complete loss of cornfield annual species – the once traditional field of poppies or corn marigolds has almost disappeared.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Although it is not possible to exactly replicate the traditionally managed hay meadow in your back garden, it is possible to artificially create such an area that is both very attractive and beneficial for wildlife. You could choose to leave an area uncut in the spring and add some spring flowering bulbs and spring flowering pot grown plants to form an attractive spring meadow. If you enjoy brilliant summer colour, then try a cornfield annual patch which would require resowing every year. If you have lots of space, why not go the whole way with a full wildflower meadow designed and made from scratch. This is, however, probably the most expensive and most difficult of these options to create.

A SPRING MEADOW

A spring flowering lawn is the easiest to create. Leave a small area of grass uncut in the spring time and see how many different flowers you can find. Try adding some bulbs. These need to be planted randomly in drifts for the

best effect and remember you won't be able to cut the grass until June when the leaves of bulbs begin to die back. Some spring flowering plant species can be added. If your lawn is quite vigorous, it is probably best growing plants from seed and then planting out directly into the meadow area. To maintain your spring meadow, cut the sward during June-September once the spring flowering species have finished blooming and removing any cuttings.

Common Poppy, *Papaver rhoeas* - This is one of the easiest cornfield 'weeds' to grow. Its bright red flowers will give an attractive show in the summer and will seed itself if you lightly rake over the soil in late summer after they have seeded.

SPRING WILDFLOWERS FOR YOUR MEADOW

NAME	COLOUR	HEIGHT
Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>)	Yellow	10-20 cm
Lady's Smock (<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>)	Pink	15-40 cm
Ox-eye Daisy (<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>)	White	20-80 cm
Primrose (<i>Primula vulgaris</i>)	Yellow	5-15 cm
Yellow Rattle (<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>)	Yellow	10-50 cm

WILDFLOWER MEADOW



CORNFIELD ANNUALS

A cornfield annual patch in a wildlife garden can be a very attractive addition. In the past cornfield annuals were the farmer's nightmare! They grew in the fields with oats and barley crops reducing yields. Recently, with the increased use of herbicides and improved seed cleaning techniques, these annual, but very attractive "weeds" have declined in abundance.

To grow cornfield annuals, you will need to set aside a small patch of ground, even 1 metre square, cultivate and sow your chosen seed mixture. The mixture can include those species marked in the list below or contact a seed stockist who will have a recommended mix. You may like to include a few of the cereal species eg, oat or barley and so recreate that traditional "feel". Although some species will reseed themselves, you will need to cultivate the area each year and perhaps reseed.

GERMINATION

Many wildflower seeds quickly become dormant after they are harvested by seed stockists. For most species, warm moist conditions will break dormancy and ensure successful germination. Some seeds may require a little help!

Scarification is a method where you lightly rub the seeds between two sheets of sand paper.

Stratification is where the seed is put in the fridge for about 6-8 weeks (not in a freezer) in a damp polythene bag containing sand.

These two processes mimic nature's way of achieving germination.

WILDFLOWER MEADOW

A wildflower meadow is probably the most difficult element of a wildlife garden to create. The reward on the other hand can be a profusion of flowers, colour, smell and sound during late spring and the summer months. In creating a wildflower meadow, you need to think carefully of where you are going to place it in your garden and what species you would like to be there. There are a few practical details worth taking note of to ensure a better result.

- Unless you are going to plant a mixture suited to shade, you will need to place the meadow in a sunny position.
- If it is possible to select a sunny and sheltered area, this will be very attractive to insects.
- From an aesthetic point of view, your wildflower meadow is probably best sited away from the house so you can look out across it. If you have a large garden, place it in a secret place so you come across it unexpectedly.

This table (right) shows plants you may like to include in your wildflower seed mix. Grasses are indicated as "Grass" in the colour column. Those species marked* you are likely to already have in your garden, those with ** are very likely to be in your garden. Seeds requiring scarification or stratification treatment are marked Sc and St respectively.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEADOW

Traditionally meadows usually grow in poor soils. Because of this, the colourful plant species can compete well with the stronger grasses and more species can co-exist. The soils in the average garden are usually fairly rich and if you were to sow a wildflower mixture, they would become choked with coarse grasses and weeds such as Creeping Buttercup and Dock. To give your wildflower seed mix a chance, you will first need to strip the top soil from the area to be sown. Once the turf and top soil have been removed and the weather is dry, cultivate the area with a rake or similar tool to produce a fine seed bed. Firm the seed bed using a roller.

Next you will need to select a seed mix for your meadow. You will need to decide whether you would prefer a spring or summer flowering mixture. If your garden is naturally damp, you may like to sow a mixture suitable for damp areas. Your mix will need to include some

WILDFLOWERS

NAME	COLOUR	HEIGHT
Bluebell (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>)	Blue	30 cm
Snakeshead Fritillary (<i>Fritillaria meleagris</i>)	Pink	20-40 cm
Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>)	White	15-25 cm
Summer Snowflake (<i>Leucojum aestivum</i>)	White	30-60 cm
Wild Daffodil (<i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus</i>)	Yellow	20-25 cm

CORNFIELDS ANNUALS FOR YOUR GARDEN

NAME	COLOUR	HEIGHT
Common Poppy (<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>)	Red	20-60 cm
Cornflower (<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>)	Blue	30-90 cm
Corn marigold (<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>)	Yellow	20-50 cm
Corncockle (<i>Agrostemma githago</i>)	Pink	30-110 cm
Scarlet pimpernel (<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>)	Red	5 cm
Scentless mayweed (<i>Chamomilla recutita</i>)	White	20-30 cm
Wild pansy (<i>Viola tricolor</i>)	Purple	10-20 cm

TIP

It is worth noting that cornfield annuals will not grow well in a grassy meadow. They are annual plants and require a disturbed soil to grow best. If sown with a meadow mixture, they will provide good colour in the first years, but thereafter will decline in numbers and visual impact.

COMMON NAME	LATIN NAME	COLOUR	HEIGHT	GERMINATION
DRY SOIL				
Harebell	<i>Campamula rotundifolia</i>	Blue	10-20 cm	
Corn Marigold	<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i>	Yellow	20-50 cm	
Wild Carrot	<i>Daucus carota</i>	White	10-30 cm	St
Lady's Bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>	Yellow	5-10 cm	
Perforate St John's Wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Yellow	5-20 cm	
Cat's Ear	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Yellow	10-30 cm	
Field Scabious	<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Violet	20-50 cm	
Corn Poppy	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Red	20-60 cm	
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Yellow	5-20 cm	
Meadow Buttercup*	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Yellow	10-35 cm	
Bulbous Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Yellow	5-20 cm	
Yellow Rattle	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	Yellow	10-30 cm	
Lesser Trefoil*	<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Yellow	5 cm	Sc
Highland Bent	<i>Agrostis castellana</i>	Grass	20-40 cm	
Sweet Vernal Grass*	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Grass	10-35 cm	
Crested Dogtail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Grass	20-50 cm	
WET SOIL				
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	White	30-60 cm	
Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil	<i>Lotus uliginosus</i>	Yellow	5-20 cm	Sc
Ragged Robin	<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>	Pink	10-45 cm	
Devil's Bit Scabious	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Purple	20-40 cm	
ANY SOIL				
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	White	10-30 cm	
Bugle	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Purple	10-20 cm	
Kidney Vetch	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	Yellow	5-15 cm	Sc
Pignut	<i>Conopodium majus</i>	White	5-20 cm	
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Purple	30-100 cm	
Wood Cranesbill	<i>Geranium sylvaticum</i>	Pink	5-15 cm	Sc
Meadow Vetchling	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Yellow	5-15 cm	Sc
Ox-Eye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	White	15-45 cm	
Birdsfoot Trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Yellow	10-40 cm	Sc
Ribwort Plantain**	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Black	5-15 cm	
Cowslip	<i>Primula veris</i>	Yellow	10-15 cm	St
Self-heal*	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Purple	5-15 cm	
Common Sorrel*	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Red	10-20 cm	
Red Champion	<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red	20-50 cm	
Red Clover*	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red	5-20 cm	Sc
White Clover**	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White	5-10 cm	Sc
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Blue	5-10 cm	
Bush Vetch	<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Purple	10-60 cm	
Common Bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Grass	15-50 cm	
Meadow Foxtail*	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Grass	20-60 cm	
Red Fescue*	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Grass	20-45 cm	
Chewings Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra ssp commutata</i>	Grass	20-40 cm	
Creeping Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra ssp rubra</i>	Grass	20-50 cm	
Fine-leaved Sheep's Fescue	<i>Festuca tenuifolia</i>	Grass	20-40 cm	
Yorkshire Fog**	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Grass	10-45 cm	
Smooth Meadow Grass*	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Grass	20-40 cm	



DAISIES



BLUEBELLS



MEADOW SWEET