

Creating a wild flower meadow in your garden

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You don't need acres of land to create a wildlife-rich meadow and it doesn't need to take over the whole garden. You can establish a wildlife-rich meadow in just a small area.

An ideal area would be quite sunny and one that isn't disturbed by humans or pets too often. Many of the typical wildflowers survive in low fertility soils so avoid areas that are very fertile.



Green-winged Orchid and Cowslip / Bob Gibbons



Cornflower Garden / Bob Gibbons



Ox-eye Daisy / Harriet Holloway

How to go about creating a meadow

- Ideally you want to start with bare soil, however you can start with an existing lawn or grassy area. It is important to know what soil pH you have so you can match the correct species of grass and flowers.
- Remove the top six inches of soil before you plant anything as wildflowers thrive in low fertile soils; just burying the top soil and bringing subsoil to the surface is usually sufficient.
- If the soil is too fertile, the coarser grasses will dominate and prevent anything else growing

... more information inside

Planting on Bare Soil



There may already be an existing wildlife-rich grassland site nearby or on your land, that hasn't been managed for a number of years. It is important to understand what you're looking at so that wildlife-rich grasslands aren't destroyed accidentally.

Preparing the ground

- ✓ Remove any existing vegetation
- ✓ Rake the soil to break it up and produce a finer, firm layer of soil



Sowing the seed

- ✓ Sow the seed during Autumn or Spring.
- ✓ The typical seed mix of wildflower and grass contains a ratio of 1:4 flowers to grass seed.
- ✓ Water the soil if you are sowing during a dry period.

The first year of management

- ✓ Wildflowers need some assistance in establishing, so in the first summer cut the grassland regularly at a high level, e.g. 4 inches or 10cm.
- ✓ Remove any cuttings from the ground to maintain a low fertility and prevent smaller plants from being smothered by the clippings.
- ✓ Pull up any unwanted weeds such as nettles, thistles and docks.
- ✓ Most flowers will not establish for a couple of years although you may get some poppies and cornflowers flowering in the first year.

Management after the first year

- ✓ Cut the area regularly to approximately 5cm between when the flowers have gone to seed and up until germination.
 - *For a Spring flowering meadow this would be between July & October.*
 - *For a Summer flowering meadow, cut between September and March.*

PLEASE REMEMBER

Small animals may be living in the grass, so make sure you check around the area before mowing it.



Wild Flower Garden / Bob Gibbons

Planting on an existing lawn

Leave an area you want to change for a year and see if anything grows on its own accord. If no wildflower species grow, then it is possible to sow some seed following the guide below.

Cut the grass as low as you can and rake the ground to break the soil up and bring bare patches to the surface.

Scatter a combination of seed mix and coarse sand over the area and then sprinkle some soil over. Water the seeds in and keep watering if in a dry spell.

What flowers could you plant in your garden?

Below is a brief list of flowers and grasses that you can pick from, we've split them into what kind of soils they survive in.



Tormentil / Bob Gibbons



Wild Thyme / Bob Gibbons

Calcareous	
Grasses	Wildflowers
Upright Brome	Cowslip
Crested Hair-grass	Greater Knapweed
Quaking grass	Fairy Flax
Common Bent	Oxeye Daisy
Yellow Oat-grass	Wild Thyme
Meadow Oat-grass	Yellow Rattle

Neutral	
Grasses	Wildflowers
Sweet Vernal-grass	Common Knapweed
Crested Dog's-tail	Lady's Bedstraw
Meadow Fescue	Bird's-foot Trefoil
Yellow Oat-grass	Native Red Clover
Red Fescue	Oxeye Daisy
Common Bent	Yellow Rattle



Greater Knapweed / Bob Gibbons

Acid	
Grasses	Wildflowers
Common Bent	Mouse-ear Hawkweed
Sheep's Fescue	Heath Bedstraw
Smooth Meadow-grass	Lesser Stitchwort
Sweet Vernal-grass	Rough/Lesser Hawkbit
Wavy Hair-grass	Sheep's Sorrel
Heath Grass	Tormentil

If you are converting a small area of your garden, it is possible to plant wildflower plugs to speed the process up. Plant in September to allow them to establish and they should flower next year.

Butterflies

Native wildflowers and grasses produce valuable food for animals. Such as nectar and pollen for insects, seeds for birds, and leaves for herbivores, including caterpillars. They are generally more valuable as food for native animals because they have evolved together, and have adapted to using native flowers.



Marsh Fritillary Butterfly / Bob Gibbons

What kind of animals will be attracted by your wildflower meadow?

The Common Blue, Marbled White, Marsh Fritillary and Brimstone can be found in a wildflower meadow; they lay their eggs on the meadow plants so caterpillars have food once they've hatched.

Some butterflies depend on particular wild plants to lay their eggs:

- ✓ Bird's-foot Trefoil and the Common Blue
- ✓ Lady's Smock and the Orange Tip
- ✓ Sheep's Sorrel and the Small Copper.



Common Blue Butterfly / Bob Gibbons



Small Copper Butterfly



Marbled White Butterfly / Jim Asher

Wildflowers offer food and shelter to many other insects including bumblebees, ladybirds and grasshoppers.

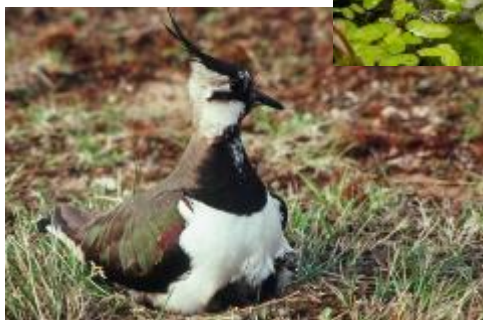
Frogs and toads

Frogs and toads are attracted by insects and the long grass as shelter as well as shrews and voles.



Common Frog / Bob Gibbons

Birds



Lapwing / Bob Gibbons

Birds such as the lapwing and reed bunting eat the insects and help to disperse the seeds throughout the meadow.

Within a couple of years, your garden will be a thriving wildlife haven!



The Grasslands Trust

for wildlife and people

The Grasslands Trust
Suite 103
Eastleigh Works
Campbell Road
Eastleigh

Phone: 02380 650093
www.grasslands-trust.org

Charity No 1097893

Photos provided by Bob Gibbons.

We believe that "people still need meadows, downlands and other grasslands full of wildlife, not just because they clean our water, or bring in tourist pounds, but because they improve our quality of life and wellbeing."



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