



How to create and manage a wildflower meadow

Did you know that wildflowers are very important in maintaining a healthy ecosystem? This is because they attract lots of bees, butterflies, birds and mammals to our parks and gardens. As a result, wildflowers are essential for ensuring our future health and wellbeing. You can play an important part in increasing the number of wildflowers across Bridgend – even a small patch can make a big difference! It's really easy to create a wildflower meadow in your garden or, with permission, in your local green space.

Getting started – what you'll need

- + Wildflower seed mix – try and pick a perennial (flowers that will grow year after year) variety that has lots of native, pollinator-friendly wildflowers in it. Good plants to look out for include cowslip, ox-eye daisy, common sorrel, red clover, meadowsweet, meadow buttercup, yellow rattle, lady's bedstraw, wild carrot and a range of wild grasses (e.g. bents, fescues and crested dogtail)
- + Spade

How to create a wildflower meadow

- 1 Choose a suitable area to plant your wildflower meadow e.g. an old flower bed or a patch of lawn. Wildflowers grow better on unproductive soil otherwise grasses will take the flowers over. The best time to sow the meadow is in the early autumn but the ground can be prepared at any stage.
 - choose an open and sunny spot
 - don't worry if it's flat or sloping
 - sow the flower seeds in the autumn for best results
- 2 Reduce the fertility of your ground by removing the top 3-6 inches of top soil with a turf cutter or a spade.
- 3 Dig over the soil and remove any weeds.
 - make your soil look a bit like breadcrumbs once it's been dug over
 - if not sowing seeds immediately, cover the ground with black plastic so that any weed seeds in the soil will die before you sow your flower seeds.



How to create a wildflower meadow continued

- 4 Sow the wildflower seeds between August and early October.
 - follow the instructions on your packet
 - scatter the seeds evenly across the area you are planting up
- 5 Walk gently across the area once you have sown your seeds to make sure the seeds are in contact with the soil. There is no need to rake them or cover them with soil.
- 6 Water the soil well until the seeds have started growing.
- 7 Enjoy your meadow growing and changing year on year. Look out for bees, butterflies, grasshoppers, birds and even bats who will love using your meadow.

How to manage a wildflower meadow

If you have sown a meadow with perennial seeds your meadow will require some looking after. It is important to manage your meadow in order to keep it healthy and to help maintain a beautiful and diverse mix of flowers and grasses.

How to manage a new meadow

To encourage perennial flowers and grasses to grow well, the meadow needs cutting the first summer after sowing. In your first growing season:

- + cut the growth in midsummer
- + remove the clippings to avoid putting too many nutrients back into the soil

The meadow will flower again in the early autumn, after which you will be able to cut it back down again.

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How to manage a wildflower meadow continued

How to manage an established meadow

Established meadows should be cut twice a year for best results. This helps to encourage certain flowers.

- 1. Spring cut** – this is useful for meadows with lush grass growth. This cut must be done no later than the end of April. The meadow can be cut back to a height of about 7.5cm (3 inches).
- 2. Late Summer/Autumn cut** – this cut helps remove surplus growth and keep grasses at bay to allow wildflowers to persist in the meadow. The grass should be cut between the end of August and late November. The clippings need to be left to dry on the ground for at least a few days to allow the seeds to drop into the meadow. You can then clear them away. This cut is particularly important if the soil is relatively fertile.

Note

If you have an established perennial meadow, it can be managed effectively with just one cut, or two, during the year.



Build a bug hotel

Why not build a bee or bug hotel alongside your wildflower meadow to give all the new insects somewhere to live? See our 'How to build a bug hotel' guide.



Top 5 tips for looking after wildflower meadows

- 1** Do not give wildflowers any extra watering or feeding. They don't need it. If you do, it can alter the balance of plants in the area. The addition of nutrients will encourage grasses to grow which will take over the flowering plants.
- 2** Remove clippings after a few days to reduce soil fertility.
- 3** Pull out perennial weeds by hand. These weeds, such as docks, thistles and nettles may start to grow in your meadow and need to be removed before they set seed to stop them taking over your meadow.
- 4** Do not use lawn weed-killers on your wildflower meadow. They will kill the wildflowers that you are encouraging to grow.
- 5** Look out for local groups that can provide wildflower meadow support, advice, volunteering opportunities and much more such as:
 - VOG, Bridgend and NPT Meadows Group on social media
 - Plantlife Cymru's Magnificent Meadows project