

Marvellous Meadows

If you have a garden with a lawn, you have the potential to create your very own wildlife hotspot.

When left untouched through spring and summer, lawns can quickly transform into areas teeming with different types of plants and animals. And it's not just the flowers that are important - different grasses will attract butterflies which breed there, such as the speckled wood, gatekeeper, and ringlet butterflies. Wildflowers will offer a source of nectar and a potential breeding habitat for a range of species.

No lawn? No problem! You can create a meadow in a pot.

Use this guide to create your own mini meadow.



Create your own mini meadow

The chilled lawn approach

Give yourself and your lawn a rest by putting away the fertiliser and lawn mower.

By taking this low effort approach to rewilding your garden, flowers you never knew existed may start to pop up, seeds will be blown in from nearby flowers, and a seed bank under your feet will have a chance to emerge.

If you leave your lawn, or a section of it, to allow plants and flowers to pop up naturally, this will benefit invertebrates by providing an increase in nectar and pollen, and varied habitat.

Leave it as long as you can between mowing to allow dandelions, daisies, or clovers to pop up. Often, what we often call weeds are fantastic native plants that bees love!



Let nature do its thing

If you want minimum effort and maximum nature, mow your meadow just once a year.

Grasses can outcompete wildflowers in nutrient-rich soils. By cutting your garden meadow once a year and removing the grass cuttings, you'll reduce the fertility of the soil which, over time, will diminish the amount of vigorous grasses and increase the diversity of flowers.

Don't be afraid to leave nettles, docks, and thistles. Nettles are a food plant for small tortoiseshell and peacock butterfly caterpillars, and ladybirds eat aphids which use nettles for shelter. Painted lady butterflies love thistles, and the very rare fiery clearwing moth lives in the roots of curled dock.

Whilst this wilder approach may not appeal to all, you can always mow around the meadow and keep it to one area, or create paths through to make it look neat.

We recommend mowing and collecting the cuttings in late autumn.



Ready, set, sow!

This approach is slightly more labour intensive, but will ensure your meadow has a spectacular display of colour. Sowing seeds will sprinkle some more magic across your wildflower meadow and allow you to choose the plants that will grow.



Use a seed mix which is appropriate for your soil type, and choose UK native species from UK suppliers. Using a perennial mix is best as the flowers will come back year after year.

However big or small the area you plan to sow, you must first prepare the area for sowing. In autumn scrape away the grass to reveal the soil below. This can be done with a rotavator, scarifier, or a garden rake.

Once you've removed a good amount of grass, sprinkle seed on the surface at a rate of 2g per m² and gently walk once over the soil to tread the seeds in very slightly. We recommend mixing your seed with sharp sand to ensure you get an even spread.

Mow and collect the cuttings in late autumn.

Meadow in a pot

No lawn? No problem! If you don't have much outside space, you can grow wildflowers in pots on a patio, windowsill, or balcony.

Fill the bottom of a well-draining pot with rocks, and layer low-nutrient soil such as a soil and sand mix over top soil (don't use compost). Sprinkle a seed mix into the pot and giving it a gentle water.

You can then simply sit back relax and watch your balcony or windowsill come to life, and admire your invertebrate visitors from the comfort of your home.



Meadow tips & tricks

Introduce yellow rattle to your meadow

Yellow rattle is known as 'the Meadow Maker'. When added to long grass areas it reduces the growth of competitive grasses, giving wildflowers more space to grow.

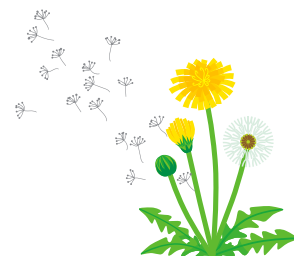


Leave some areas un-cut all year round

By leaving patches of long grass unmown throughout the year, we can ensure that the whole lifecycles of species are completed. The pupae of many species overwinter in the long grass, re-emerging as a caterpillar until the warmer days of spring.

Avoid using herbicides, fertilisers, or moss killer

These are detrimental to wildflower species, and lawn moss can help wildflowers establish.



Give plants time

Allow plants time to go to seed before cutting your lawn so they increase naturally.

Humble dandelions and daisies are fantastic lawn flowers

They are some of the first lawn flowers to appear each year, and they provide much-needed food to early bees and other pollinators when there is little else out in flower. Dandelions grow pretty much throughout the year, and sparrows also enjoy eating the seeds.

As well as being great for flowers, bees, and butterflies, your garden meadow will have much farther-reaching impacts on your local wildlife. Many birds feed on insects, whilst longer grassland also benefits mammals such as hedgehogs and mice.

And connecting with nature is good for us, too!

