

New Sustainable landscapes – Wildflower Meadow

Why create new wildflower meadows?

- traditional, diverse, wildflower meadows have been in unprecedented decline in the last 30 years.



- wildflower meadows form important habitats.
- wildflowers support a variety of wildlife
- meadows are attractive features in our landscape.
- they are sustainable landscapes and useful in anti-flooding design as they are often found in flood plains or agricultural land.

Conserving our few remaining real "wild" meadows is vital as local seed banks.

We can also create new wildflower meadows from less diverse grassland. Less intensive management means that

you can channel resources into other areas- saving time and money, plus enhancing the landscape!

Wildflower meadows are a complex habitat.

To create a new meadow from scratch you will need specialist input.

This is essential for a successful outcome.

Have a look for part of your gardens /estate that you could turn into a wildflower habitat. Meadows are naturally beautiful. They soon become fascinating, inspiring and interesting places to visit and attract a wide variety of wildlife.

You can create a meadow on a very small plot, although large areas can look spectacular over the years.

Some initial points to bear in mind;

- i) Choose an area in the garden which is sunny and open. That is,
 - ii) Not shaded by trees/walls/shrubs/hedges.
- ii) Try to choose somewhere a bit off the beaten track. This is because wildflower species are delicate little plants so they hate trampling.
- iii) Try to find a part of the garden that has not had fertiliser added.
 - iv) This is because soil fertility needs to be very low/ low.
 - v) This will ensure a greater diversity of wildflowers and grasses, like those of old traditional meadows
 - vi) Also, ensuring less competition from taller, coarser plants which tend to soon "outcompete" lovely delicate wildflowers. Avoid nettles, thistles and dock ridden areas of high fertility, for the same reasons.

Landvision

Design and Management
Tel 01892 782200

vii) As the meadow progresses these "weed species" need to be removed/ at least controlled if they appear as they will compete for light and moisture.

3 options for starting or restoring a wildflower meadow

OPTION 1 starting from bare soil,

OPTION 2 increasing the diversity of a FINE grassed area using wildflower plugs (small plants)

OPTION 3 Increasing the species diversity of an old meadow which has been neglected for years (and has lovely plants like orchids in it)

For this article we will deal with OPTION 1- Starting from bare soil.

Remove all troublesome weeds.

For large areas, it is best to test the soil fertility)If it is high (high N, P, &K..), reduce the soil fertility by scraping off the top 15-20 cm of soil to reveal the subsoil. This is essential for a good result.



- vii) Deciding on the type of seed mixture. What type of seed mixture- this can be a basic seed mixture containing 4 grasses and 10 herbs. The selection of plant species in the mixture will depend on the type of soil, the main types of wildflower meadow soil habitats being (very broadly) a)neutral (pH 5-7.5) most clay/loam soils, or b)acid (low pH, ie. less than pH 5)lime- poor, or even c)alkaline(high pH), most thin soils on chalk or limestone. So, the nature of the soil, sandy or clayey, or loam PLUS the drainage, wet or dry is relevant to which wildflower species will thrive on your site.

Seasonally damp (neutral) grassland is rare and valuable also.

viii) The best time to sow your seed mix is early autumn (Sept) or best in the Spring (April-early May) for soils which are prone to winter water logging.

For advice on your land please ring us to 01892 782200 discuss a site visit/ email us on charmaine@landvision.co.uk

