

Small Wildflower Meadow in your Garden



Low fertility is good

Poor soils, well-drained soils, even dry ones, are much better than fertile or moist. This is because stressful growing conditions will limit the growth of grasses and weeds. Most of the desirable wildflowers are plants of poorer drier soils, and they will only flourish with reduced competition from other surrounding plants. Areas of crushed hardcore or shallow soils over concrete are potentially good places for wildflower diversity, but they must have perfect drainage.

Ensure that you sow at the density rate recommended for the mix – this is usually very much lower than when sowing a lawn, for example. The seed quantity is so low that it is easier to mix it thoroughly with dry sand. Once mixed, divide into two portions. Sow one, walking up and down, then sow the other batch walking the plot side to side.

Weeding and mowing

It is vital that any aggressive weed roots are removed, e.g. docks, nettles. Mowing at least once in the first year helps to reduce grass vigour, but be sure to remove the clippings. If you leave them, the decaying clippings will raise the fertility of the soil, which is what you don't want.

Meadows are dynamic

Every year the species mix will be different, especially in the early years, when short-lived plants such as ox-eye daisies get the upper hand, put on a good show, but then diminish. If there is a lot of lush growth in year two, consider mowing in early summer, which may seem ruthless, but everything will flower – just a bit later, and the vigour of the most competitive components will be given a knock.

