

Wildflower Meadows – Management for perennial wildflower and grass mixes

Management after establishment

An early cut is often useful after sowing as on most soils, annual weeds will appear and grow rapidly (an exception to this is on soils where fertility is low). Cutting down the annual weeds allows light into the perennial species which have been sown and removes the competition for water and nutrients. This will result in faster establishment and a tidy appearance. Some judgement is required to decide whether and when a cut is helpful but when annual weeds grow to around 30 cm (1 foot) tall they can usually be cut to about 10 cm (4"). The grass seedlings can often be seen at this stage and the aim of cutting is to remove most of the weed growth without cutting the grasses and the wildflower seedlings (which are normally smaller than the grass seedlings). For early spring sowings, cutting after about eight weeks (and just occasionally) again after another eight weeks is often about right. The cut material should be removed so that it does not lie on top of the seedlings and smother them. Removal also helps to reduce the fertility of the soil, helping to reduce overall growth and create a good balance between the growth of wildflowers and grasses.

In some cases cutting the annual weeds may not be necessary, if there is little growth, few weed plants or the appearance is acceptable and the perennial species will often survive even quite a heavy infestation of annual weeds to take over in the second growing season.

At the end of the first growing season (September), the meadow should be cut and the cuttings removed.

Ongoing management

Generally meadows should be cut and the cuttings removed once a year at the end of the growing season (normally September). Often this is the only management required. Cutting for hay earlier in the season is also possible.

Grazing may be used instead, with cattle or sheep for example grazing at the end and/or beginning of the growing season. Leaving the meadow ungrazed during the middle of the season allows the plants to flower. Generally, heavy grazing over a short period of time is preferable to light grazing over a long period as there is likely to be less selection of particular species, which may then be lost. 'Poaching' or the opening up of the soil by animals trampling the ground can be helpful in creating new sites for more seeds to germinate.

Pull out or spot spray any perennial weeds such as Docks, Nettles and Ragwort.

Things to avoid

Adding fertilizer

SCOTIA SEEDS
Wildflowers of Scotland

✉ scotiasseeds@btconnect.com
Mavisbank, Farnell, Brechin, Angus, DD9 6TR
☎ 01356 626425 📠 01356 629183