

## Wildflower Meadows - Sowing

### Spring Sowing

Early March to end of June. You can sow as soon as it is possible to work the soil and the soil starts to warm up (later on wet soils). Late sowing after April is possible up to the end of June but there is an increasing risk after May that seedlings may appear in weather conditions which become hot and dry, killing vulnerable young plants. In some areas of the country, the risk is quite small and, depending on weather conditions, sowing can be done throughout the summer.

OR

### Autumn sowing

Mid-August to October. This has the advantage of an early start in spring. The disadvantage is that the site will look bare over winter with the possibility of soil erosion on some sites and there may be winter kill of seedlings by frost.

### How to Sow

The mixture should be sown on or very close to the soil surface. Mix the seed very well as some seeds are very small and dense and will separate from larger and less dense seeds.

☼ **By hand:** Choose a calm day as seed can be blown away easily. Divide the site up into at least four equal areas. Divide up the seed into the same number of equally-sized lots. You can use some dry sand, sawdust or even barley meal or coarse porridge to bulk up the seed so that it is easier to spread and to see where it has been spread.

Use the first lot of seed on the first area to get used to sowing at the correct sowing rate. Seed can be spread by hand from a box or bag using a wide swinging action (to cover up to 2m width). Walk up and down in a regular pattern, remember that it can be difficult to see the seed on the ground so you may have to look at your footprints or use a marker. If you can, use half of the seed for each area sowing in one direction and then use the other half sowing at rights angles. This helps to avoid leaving any empty patches.

☼ **Mechanically:** broadcast by seed or fertilizer spreader. Cut the rate down to a very low level to start with and sow twice as above. A seed drill can be used but it must be set to allow the seed to be sown on or very close to the surface.

### After Sowing

Roll the ground after sowing. For small areas, seed can be trampled in by foot or even driven over by a quad bike for example if a roller is not available – the purpose is to press the seed into the soil surface so that it makes better contact with the soil and will absorb water from the soil more effectively.

A very light raking or harrowing before rolling can help to settle the seed into the soil, especially for sowings late in the spring or if dry conditions are expected but the seed should not be buried.

**SCOTIA SEEDS**  
Wildflowers of Scotland

✉ [scotiaseeds@btconnect.com](mailto:scotiaseeds@btconnect.com)  
Mavisbank, Farnell, Brechin, Angus, DD9 6TR  
☎ 01356 626425 📠 01356 629183

# Wildflower Meadows - Getting Started: Site Selection and Preparation

## Site Selection

Meadows are plant communities of open ground and will grow on sites ranging from the very exposed (for example coastal) to the sheltered, including some light shade. Very dry and wet soils can support meadows and they will grow on acid and calcareous sites. Meadows generally require maintenance by annual cutting or grazing, without which they eventually turn into scrub or woodland.

## Preparation

- ☼ Kill off any existing vegetation by spraying or by ploughing or digging it in (cutting it short first may help). Even existing grass should be killed although if this cannot be done, it may be possible to over-sow or slot seed to introduce wildflowers and other grasses (see below) but generally this is less effective and in some circumstances can fail.
- ☼ Prepare a fine seed bed - a smooth surface with the soil broken down as much as possible. For small areas breaking soil down with a fork or rake will do. For larger areas, rotovating with a garden rotovator. For 'agricultural' size areas, rotovating or power harrowing.
- ☼ In engineering projects, house building or creation of ponds, where soil is being moved and there is a choice of subsoil and topsoil available, a mixture of topsoil and subsoil (about 50:50) for a depth of about 30 cm overlying subsoil is usually ideal, provided the topsoil is not excessively weedy (especially with Docks and other perennial weeds). Subsoil alone can be used but often the structure is poor and the fertility very low which results in very slow establishment of wildflowers and frequently the domination of plants like Clovers which do not depend on Nitrogen in the soil for their growth.
- ☼ If large numbers of weeds are expected on a site, for example a site which has been very weedy over a couple of years, a 'stale seed bed' technique can be used before sowing to reduce the number of weed seedlings. This involves preparing the soil for sowing and allowing the weed seeds to germinate and then killing them by rotovating or spraying, repeating the process once or twice more. This delays sowing but can be worthwhile in reducing weeds. In extreme situations it can be carried over more than one season. Sites which have had grass growing on them for a long time often have a relatively low number of weed seeds present in the soil

**SCOTIA SEEDS**  
Wildflowers of Scotland

✉ [scotiasseeds@btconnect.com](mailto:scotiasseeds@btconnect.com)  
Mavisbank, Farnell, Brechin, Angus, DD9 6TR  
☎ 01356 626425 📠 01356 629183