

WILD YOUR SPACE

Wild your school
Rewild your children



Wildflower Meadows, Strips and Banks

The number of native wildflowers in the country has declined dramatically over the last one hundred years or so. This has had a devastating impact on the insects, birds and mammals that depend on this unique landscape for both food and shelter. So, whether you have space for a large meadow, a short narrow strip or good sized bank, one thing is for sure – it all counts, and the more space that is made for wildflowers the better. This is also one of the most important and significant types of nature restoration projects that you can engage with.

As you would expect, the larger the project, the more planning and consideration given to future maintenance will be required. For guaranteed success, any meadow, big or small, will need to be

cut back every year, and all the cuttings should be removed after about one week. It might seem unnatural for us to talk about cutting back plants, but we are simply doing the work that large herbivores would previously have done through natural grazing in the wild.

If, after consideration, a full wildflower meadow seems unattainable, then we can find other ways to increase the wildflower count in your school playground, which will still be very worthwhile. Children love getting involved with planting and growing, and it is easy to link every stage of a project like this to **valuable outdoor lessons** (something that we will always readily work with you on if required) and a deeper appreciation and understanding of nature. You will quite literally end up spending a lot of your time chatting about the birds and the bees!

Even by doing something as simple as creating a No-Mow area to an existing school lawn can make a huge difference. Traditional school lawns and playing fields, with very short and regularly mowed grass, are not particularly wild-life friendly and don't support much life in general. Think of a No-Mow area as a kind of Live-In lawn – where existing

Funding

Don't forget our Wild Your Space Microgrant, which is unique to the Scottish Borders and which has already helped numerous local schools to make their playgrounds more wild-life (and child) friendly.

www.brightgreenature.org/microgrant

(NB – This link also takes you to our list of native plants).

www.brightgreenature.org/wildyourspace

flower seeds will, at last, get a chance to grow and flower, where butterflies and other pollinators will reappear, and where small mammals can scurry around and take shelter. Then after the first year you could consider adding some native plug plants to mix it up a bit more.

In some respects, it is easier to start with a bare patch of land, than an existing area of grass. Native wildflowers need poor quality soil with low fertility and few nutrients, which means ideally removing existing grass (and top soil along with it), or at very least using a rotovator or scarifier to expose around 50% soil. So if you do have some patches of bare soil, get the children to lightly break the top layer (with a rake or similar) then scatter some wildflower seeds (around late August) and then get the kids to stamp them in.

We always recommend local suppliers for your native seeds and plants, as local plants will have the best chances of survival, whilst providing the most benefits for existing wildlife. Give consideration to your soil type, whether your area is well drained or wet and whether it's a sunny or shaded spot – and share this information with your supplier who will be happy to advise. You can expect visible results after year one but, depending on the weather and other factors, some seeds may take several years to germinate. Obviously you can add fresh plants from time to time, and your future choices can be guided by the type of plants that you can see already doing well. In the right conditions wildflowers will visibly multiply year on year.



Useful links and resources are provided below, but here are a few Bright Green Nature **Top Tips**...

- Always seek advice with regards to sowing/planting times and techniques (suitable for your chosen plants and for your part of the Borders).*
- Always seek advice with regards to mowing – time of year, height of cut, etc.* Levels of success can be dependent on your mowing pattern.
- Herbicides and pesticides are an absolute NO – on or anywhere near any wildflower area (or school for that matter).
- Poor quality soil really is best – don't be tempted with compost or fertiliser.
- Yellow Rattle (one of our favourite wildflowers) is your secret weapon! Often referred to as the Meadow Maker, it fights back against the grass. Making space for other wildflowers to flourish.
- When removing cuttings or turf, use these to create habitat piles in another area of your garden space.
- Be patient! You may be lucky and see good results in a short space of time (gardening wise), but full results may take several years and involve annual maintenance.

Further advice

* Please note that we are happy to be your first point of contact regarding any additional advice. We don't know all the answers, but we'll probably know where to find them. These websites in particular contain useful information for anyone considering planting wildflowers –

Shop - Emorsgate Seeds (see additional information section)

www.hazelwoodlandscapes.com/wildflower-meadows-nectar-lawns

Advice Notes – Scotia Seeds

www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/advice-notes

For inspiration- Wildflower Meadows & Nectar Lawns | Hazelwood Landscapes

www.hazelwoodlandscapes.com/wildflower-meadows-nectar-lawns



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