



Wildflower Meadow Aftercare

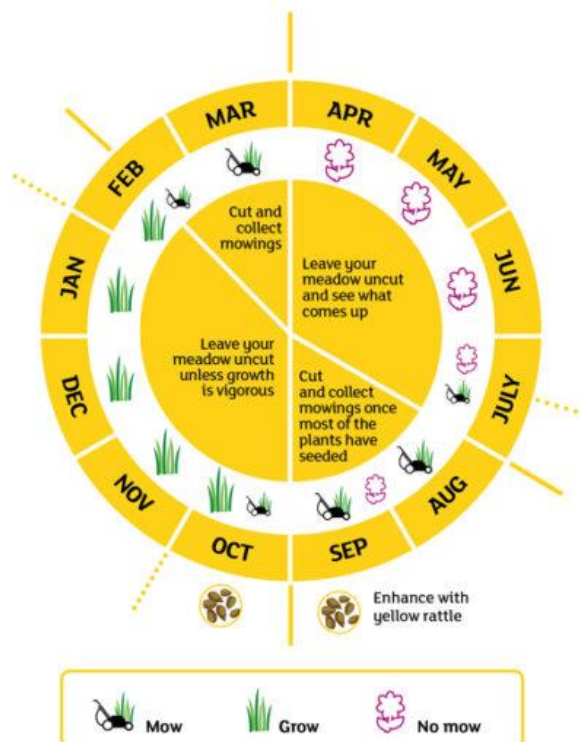


After Sowing

If it doesn't rain, water small areas of wildflowers regularly until the young plants are well rooted. Rain water lacks the chlorination of tap water, so is preferable. Water butts are a free and ready source.

Once established, avoid watering or feeding – wildflower areas don't require any additional watering or feeding. Many native flowers colonise poor land, and adding extra nutrients and water will only encourage excessive vigour in the grasses, which will consequently outcompete the more desirable flowering plants.

Managing your meadow area



When to cut your meadow / No Mow area

Between August and September you will need to conduct a 'hay cut'. For schools, you could wait until the beginning of the autumn term and get the children involved in raking off the cuttings and shaking the seeds into the soil. Before cutting (a strimmer is fine for this), check for slow worms, hedgehogs, etc. by going through the meadow area with the back of a rake.

If you are cutting without the students help, **remove the cuttings a few days later, having allowed the seed to drop.** Cuttings should be removed from the meadow to prevent nutrients building up.

Create a compost heap- these make great habitats for slow worms, as well as many invertebrates and amphibians.

If the meadow was planted in late summer, then a spring cut will help the seedlings establish a stronger root system and knock back any faster growing grasses that have been included in the seed mix.

Cutting established meadows

(See diagram above) Established perennial and mixed meadows can be cut at several specific times in the year, early spring, later summer and autumn, depending on how vigorous the grass is growing and which wildflowers you want to encourage. Carrying out these cuts will keep your meadow in good shape.

Remember to always **leave the cut material in place for a few days** after the summer/ autumn cut as this allows time for the seeds to drop to the ground. Rake up cuttings and remove to help reduce soil fertility.

Following the last cut of the season, all meadows can be kept mown to a medium height, so the grass is short and neat through the winter.

Weeding your meadow or No Mow area

Although it may seem counter-intuitive to weed a wildflower meadow, it's all part of maintaining a balanced mix of species. Especially in new meadows, it's well worth weeding out any unwanted plants that appear or reducing the numbers if certain species are too prolific.

If the soil is fertile, more vigorous species may dominate at the expense of more delicate ones, and very successful self-seeders, such as teasels and thistles, can form large colonies unless controlled.

So keep watch on the balance of species and simply dig out or pull out any plants that are getting too numerous or are unwanted, before they set seed.

Perennial weeds such as docks, thistles and nettles – pull these out by hand before they set seed. Nettles can also be knocked back by repeated cutting.

This could be a suitable task for students, with supervision and gardening gloves!

Too Many Dominant Grasses - sowing the annual wildflower yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), which is semi-parasitic on grasses and will weaken their growth. Sow in August after cutting the meadow, and keep the grass mown until March.

Sources

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/lawns/wildflower-meadow-maintenance>

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/lawns/wildflower-meadow-establishment>

<https://nomowmay.plantlife.org.uk/what-is-no-mow-may/>

[Create-a-meadow-poster-FINAL.pdf \(plantlife.org.uk\)](#)