

Wildlife & Countryside Services

Wildflower Turf Fact Sheet

The grasses in the mix are native to the British Isles and are chosen to complement the flowers and not to compete with them, which is a common problem with conventional "*wildflower plugs*" or wildflower seeding. This allows the flowers to succeed rather than be swamped by the grasses, which is a common problem with conventional soil based wildflower turf or most wild flower seeding. The grasses are visually attractive while they seed, along side the wild flowers, and the combination provides a food source for birds and a favourable habitat for butterflies and other insects.

The formation of a dense sward of turf, combined with the large roll size, mean that this turf acts as a weed blanket where the plants grown in the turf get a head start. They are already established and so prevent the establishment of weed seeds that are inherent in the soil below the turf.

The seed mix has been designed to give a high proportion of flowers as well as grasses. The 75% wildflower and 25% grass mix is unusual in this type of mix and is possible due to the soil-less system.

Conventional flower turf is typically sown at 20% wildflowers and 80% grass seeds. The great risk with this is that the grasses dominate the flowers and very few flowers grow as a result.

The plants in flower will vary through the spring and summer according to the different species of flowers in the turf. The emergence of flowers and the type of plants that flower will vary from year to year according to temperature, moisture and available nutrients. This will ensure that no two years are the same (as is the case with true wild flower meadows) and gives a constantly changing landscape.

Once established our wildflower turf has the added advantage of requiring very little maintenance. It will not require fertilising and only needs cutting in the autumn. During establishment it would need to be watered. Weeding should not be necessary due to the weed blanket affect of the turf.



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Wild Flower Varieties

All these wild flowers are sown in our **Wild Flower Turf**.

Which species flower depends on underlying soil types and other environmental factors. The wide variety of species in the turf ensures that a good show of wildflowers can be assured on most soil types.

Other species present are Autumn Hawkbit, Bladder Campion, Common Sorrel, Common Toadflax, Field Scabious, Greater Hawkbit, Meadow Cranesbill, Meadowsweet, Ragged Robin, Tufted Vetch, Wild Carrot, Wild Marjoram, Wild Red Clover, White Campion.



Betony

Member of Mint family. Square stems bearing narrow oval deep green leaves with bright magenta pink flowers. Anglo-Saxons used it for medicines and as protective charm. Flowers June to Sept. Grows to a height of 75cm.



Birdsfoot Trefoil

Yellow pea-like flowers with distinctive birds foot seedpods. Commonly known as “Eggs and Bacon”. Butterflies’ and moths’ favourite. Flowers May to September. Grows to 30cm.



Cats Ear

Dandelion-like yellow flower. Flowers May to August. Grows to a height of 60cm.



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Common Vetch

Ladder-like leaflets with “needle” on ends. At bottom leaves are stipules on each of these is a black spot, this secretes sugary substance that attracts ants that then help to defend the plant against insects. Variable pink/purple flowers from June onwards. Grows to a height of 40cm.



Cowslip

Member of Primrose family. Pretty clusters of small primrose-like yellow flowers. Flowers April to May. Grows to a height of 30cm.



Ladies Bedstraw

Tiny yellow flowers smelling of honey on tall thin stems. Attracts wide variety of butterflies and moths. Flowers June to August. Grows to a height of 80 cm.



Knapweed

Member of Daisy Family. Deep pink many petalled flowers opening from hard bud. Was used in olden days for its medicinal benefits and for telling fortunes! Attracts butterflies and birds like the seeds. Flowers June to September. Grows to a height of 100cm.



Meadow Buttercup

Flower with five bright glossy yellow petals, finer leaves and taller than common buttercup. Flowers May to September. Grows to a height of 50cm.



Musk Mallow

Tall delicate pink mallow flowers with sweet musky scent. Good nectar food for butterflies etc. Flowers July to Sept. Grows to a height of 45cm.



Oxeye Daisy

Member of Daisy family. Looks like a large daisy. Said to deter flies if planted near houses. Flowers May to September. Grows to height of 60—90 cm.



Perforate St Johns Wort

Round stemmed with two opposite ridges, oval unstalked leaves peppered with tiny translucent dots, only visible when held up to light. Yellow flowers with five petals, in clusters. A particular favourite of bees. Bears a fruit in a capsule that contains many seeds. Flowers May – Sept. Grows to a height of 80cm.



Red Campion

Member of Pink Family. Grows to 90cm. Pretty bright red flowers divided petals that close at night. Loved by Bumblebees and butterflies. Flowers May to Sept. Grows to a height of 100cm.



Ribwort Plantain

Brownish flowers. Good for seed eating birds and butterflies and moths. Flowers April to August. Grows to a height of 30cm



Salad Burnet

Distinctive leaves which separate into tiny pairs of oval leaflets, when crushed smell of cucumber and can be added to salads. Flower heads are round, pink followed by droopy yellow anthers. Attracts birds, bees and other insects. Flowers July onwards. Grows to a height of 80cm.



Selfheal

Distinctive oblong flower heads, deep blue/pink. Whole flower head resembles a fir cone in shape. This plant readily self-seeds. Excellent nectar plant for insects. Flowers May to June. Grows to a height of 30cm.



Yarrow

Member of Pink Family. Frondy leaves & large panicles of tiny aromatic flowers. Butterflies, moths, ladybirds love it. Has many herbal properties. Yarrow is drought resistant and may look green and fresh even in dried-up grassland in the heat of summer. Flowers July to October. Grows to a height of 92cm.



Yellow Rattle

Partly parasitic plant that inhibits growth of grass. Small, squat yellow flowers have two lips, with tiny violet teeth on upper lip. In seed stage the capsule rattles in the wind hence the name. Flowers May—August. Grows to a height of 30cm



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Wildflower Turf Specifications

<u>Latin Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
Wildflower content	
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow
Centaurea nigra	Lesser Knapweed
Galium verum	Lady's Bedstraw
Geranium pratense	Meadow Cranesbill
Hypericum perforatum	Perforate St Johns Wort
Hypochaeris radicata	Cats Ear
Leucanthemum vulgare	Oxeye Daisy
Lotus corniculatus	Birds-foot Trefoil
Lychnis flos-cuculi	Ragged Robin
Malva moschata	Musk Mallow
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain
Primula veris	Cowslip
Prunella vulgaris	Selfheal
Ranunculus acris	Meadow Buttercup
Rhinanthus minor	Yellow Rattle
Sanguisorba minor	Salad Burnet
Silene dioica	Red Campion
Stachys officinalis	Betony
Vicia cracca	Tufted Vetch
Vicia sativa ssp segetalis	Common Vetch
Grasses	
Cynosurus cristatus	Crested Dogstail
Fescue ovina	Sheeps Fescue
Fescue rubra ssp littoralis	Slender Creeping Red Fescue

75% wildflower 25% grass by weight.

Wildflower seed proportions by volume.



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SITE PREPARATION AND TURF CARE

1. PREPARATION

Existing vegetation should be killed or removed. Dig over or rotovate the soil to at least 100mm deep and rake over to create a reasonably fine tilth. Remove large stones, roots or clods of earth.

The wildflower turf does not require a top quality finish to the soil preparation, as the end result is intentionally 'meadow like'. However it is vital that the roots of the plants in the turf are all in contact with the soil to ensure that the turf establishes well. By the same token the soil need not be completely level as the turf will develop robustly and any slight unevenness will be lost as the turf grows to its full height.

2. DRAINAGE

Attention must be paid to both underground and surface drainage. Ideally the soil should be free draining and not compacted. However if waterlogged soil is the problem please contact us for advice.

3. SOIL STRUCTURE/FERTILITY

Wildflowers can survive on fewer nutrients than conventional lawn grasses. If the soil is highly fertile grasses and weeds tend to swamp out wildflowers as they are, generally, less competitive. Therefore wildflowers will do better on poor soils than lawn grasses and it is important NOT to apply fertilizer to the soil prior to, or after, laying the turf.

Where wildflowers are seeded, it may be necessary to remove good quality top soil to increase the success rate of the seed. THIS IS NOT NECESSARY with the wildflower turf as it acts as a weed blanket and establishes before the weed seeds in the soil can become competitive with the more developed plants in the turf.

Therefore wildflower turf will establish on a large range of soil types and soil structures.



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MAINTENANCE INSTRUCTIONS

There is **MINIMAL** maintenance required for the wildflower turf.

1. WATERING

Once laid water the turf thoroughly. If the soil is not soaked before laying it is important to check that this initial watering soaks through to the soil beneath the turf. During this watering check by lifting a corner of the turf to ensure that the soil is damp. Do not allow the turf to dry out during the time it establishes. For the first growing season it is important to water the turf occasionally, during extended dry spells. Once well established the wildflower turf will tend to cope with most circumstances but the flowers will benefit from water during very dry periods.

2. FERTILISING

No fertilizer is needed, although in some circumstances, for example on a green roof or where the turf is on very low fertility soil such as sand or gravel, the addition of a light dose of fertilizer at certain times of the year may improve plant development.

3. MOWING

Once established the wildflower turf requires very little maintenance, **HOWEVER**, there is one important task to carry out each autumn; to cut the plants and remove these cuttings.

This can be done by strimming and raking or using a mower and collecting the cuttings. Make sure these tools are sharp and try to minimize trafficking. Cutting the plants back to 2 to 3 inches (50 to 75 mm) in length is a vital part of their lifecycle and ensures that re-growth will continue year on year.

This should be carried out in the autumn, ideally after the plants have set and shed their seed. Not only does this tidy up the area for the winter, but it stops the senesced summer growth from covering the growing plant in a layer of rotting plant material.

An open sward over the winter ensures healthy, disease-free plants, which can benefit from the amount of light that is available to them during these months. As the spring approaches the wildflowers and grasses are in the perfect position to develop flowers and seed heads quickly to repeat their perennial cycle thus guaranteeing a wildflower meadow year after year.



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