



The benefits of creating new wild flower communities as part of a wider environmental effort are now widely recognised. There is also increasing interest in exploiting the sensory appeal of wild flowers and their insect visitors in more formal settings, especially as the use of native plants often results in lower maintenance costs.

Establishing wild flowers, used to be an expensive and laborious job. Now there are many more options in order to establish a wildflower meadow. The most favoured of these is to sow a wildflower mix then add the more difficult species.

At Alba we are growing a small selection of Wildflowers which are the more difficult to establish from seed but which will grow in a variety of situations.

While sowing and planting are both useful techniques for introducing Wildflowers, the advantages of plants over seeds in landscaping are their predictability and reliability whilst their use provides far greater control over plant location and ratio between species. Plants also mature more rapidly than introduction from seed to the flowering and propagating stage.

In order to mimic the mosaics of species that exist within natural woodland field layers, introduced species should be clustered in groups instead of being spread through a site as discrete individuals. Close planting facilitates pollination and therefore seed production. Densities of 6-9 plants/m² are considered suitable for the introductions of most field layer species.

Arable Field Margins

One way to improve the nature conservation value of an arable farm without serious impact on profitability is to establish conservation headlands. These are strips around selected edges of fields in which the agro-ecological conditions are managed to encourage the establishment of a non-aggressive, diverse flora which provides a habitat and food source for desirable fauna.

- They limit invasion of the field from the boundary by aggressive weeds such as cleavers and sterile brome.
- Wildflowers provide a nectar source for hoverflies which can suppress invasion by cereal aphids.
- The Plants and their leaf litter provide cover for predatory beetles, which also control insect pests.
- Insects encouraged by the floristic diversity provide an essential protein source for both wild birds and game bird chicks
- The diverse ground cover can provide nest sites for ground nesting birds such as the skylark and particularly if backed by a hedge, sunning sites for game birds.
- The floristic diversity provides food for a wide variety of butterflies and songbirds.
- The flowers are pleasant to look at and foster an image of environmentally conscious agriculture.
- The short grass which with attractive wild flowers can be used to encourage walkers to use footpaths where these have been diverted around the headlands

Mowing regimes

Meadows are usually managed in one of two ways, depending on when most of the plants flower.

Spring flowering meadows are not mowed until after midsummer, then kept short into the autumn. Summer flowering meadows are mowed in the spring up until about June, then left to flower until late autumn.

In both cases mowing is resumed once most of the seed is ripe. Leaving the hay on the ground for a few days helps shed the seed back into the meadow (alternatively, the hay can be used as a seed source for a new meadow elsewhere). After this the hay should be removed, to help lower soil fertility.

SOME DON'T'S

- Do not sow into weedy ground. Wildflowers cannot compete with weeds.
- Do not use standard grass seed mix. It is too vigorous and looks unkempt.
- Do not use topsoil—it contains weed seeds which must be eliminated before sowing the meadows.
- Do not use ryegrass (*Lolium* spp). Which is too competitive and untidy.
- Do not irrigate to force germination, but do irrigate to maintain growth if necessary after the majority of seedlings have emerged.

Wildflower meadows are more expensive to establish but much cheaper to maintain than close-mown grass. They are more visually attractive, as a result of the colours changing with the season. They are of much greater value to insect and bird life than uniform grass. Normally they need to be cut only twice in late summer and once in spring, making the cost of establishment and maintenance cheaper than grass over a three year period.

Fertile Grassland Meadow

In a fertile grass area the taller and more vigorous wild flowers must be used. Possible choices are the Oxeye Daisy, Lesser Knapweed, Meadow Cranesbill, Musk Mallow and Field Scabious. Other effective plants include Red Campion and Yarrow. Grass competition and growth needs to be controlled in the establishment year, the flowers actually use the long grass to provide support for their rather leggy growth. Mixed planting creates an attractive blend of white, blue and purple capable of maintaining appeal from May to September.

Low Fertility Calcareous Meadow

This low mixed sward can be planted with some of the most attractive wild flowers, many of which are important food sources for butterflies. Examples Clustered Bell Flower and the Knapweeds. Other attractive wild flowers which can be included are Selfheal and Harebell.

Damp and Wet Areas

Yellow Flag Iris, Marsh Marigold and Purple Loosestrife thrive in wet sites and provide useful feature flowers at water margins. Meadow Sweet, and Ragged Robin are planted in drifts in damp grassland areas.



It is possible to create a spectacular display by using restricted colour schemes of one or a few species in clearly defined blocks. Set out below are some design ideas that have proved highly successful.

Cowslip Meadow

Cowslips can be planted into a lawn which is kept mown at 5cm until late February/early March. Grass cutting is stopped and the cowslips are allowed to flower for at least six to eight weeks in April and May. Cutting can be started after flowering is finished or in mid June to allow for seed dispersal. Thereafter the lawn is cut as normal.

Red Campion Hedgerow

A particularly effective way to use Red Campion is to plant along the edge of woodland and hedges. These vivid pink wild flowers can create a solid mass colour in May and June. The plants can be cut back any time after flowering.

Ox-eye Daisy Drifts

Ox-eye Daisy planted at 10/m² will, within two years, create a dramatic, highly visible and reliable block of white flowers from June to August. The key to sustainability is to open up the grass sward after the Autumn cut, for example by chain harrowing. Other effective plants to use in solid drifts include Musk Mallow, Lesser Knapweed, Field Scabious, and Meadow Cranesbill.

Primrose Bank

Primroses are shade loving and can be planted into steep North and East facing grass banks. Normal grass management is introduced after flowering.

Garden Borders

Grow some native wildflowers in among the flower borders. Dense plantings of wildflowers will provide a long flowering season, attract Butterflies, require no weeding and will only need to be cut down at the end of the season.

Herbaceous Borders

At the front of the bed spring flowering and the lower species are planted such as Cowslips, Harebell and Primrose. In the Middle of the border are planted Selfheal, Musk Mallow, Yarrow, Red and White Campion, Ragged Robin, Purple Loosestrife, Clustered Bellflower and Meadow Cranesbill. At the back of the border the tallest plants are planted such as Ox-eye Daisy, Lesser Knapweed, Field Scabious and Meadowsweet.



Alba Trees plc
Lower Winton Gladsmuir East Lothian EH33 2AL
Tel: 01620 825058 Fax: 01620 825316
Email: sales@albatrees.co.uk
www.albatrees.co.uk



wild flowers



www.albatrees.co.uk



SPECIES CURRENTLY IN PRODUCTION

SPECIES	COMMON NAME	HEIGHT (cms)	FLOWERING TIME	COMMENTS
PERENNIAL AND BIENNIAL SPECIES FOR PERMANENT MEADOWS				
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	10-30	June-September	Grows well in meadows or on roadside verges. Likes well drained soil but is very adaptable.
<i>Campanula glomerata</i>	Clustered Bellflower	30-50	June-August	Suits light or chalk soils. Will not stand to much competition from grasses.
<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Harebell	15-30	July-September	Dainty blue 'bell' flowers. Attracts bees. Recommended for the rockery. Requires sun and dry sandy soil.
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Lesser Knapweed	40-60	July-September	Easy to grow and it does well in a summer meadow. Favourite of bees and butterflies.
<i>Geranium pratense</i>	Meadow Cranesbill	30-60	June-September	Attractive plant with bright blue flowers. Excellent bee plant. Highly recommended for herbaceous borders. Requires sun and well-drained soil.
<i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Field Scabious	20-80	July-September	Large attractive plant in a summer meadow.
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye Daisy	30-50	May-September	Well known wildflower often known as the Dog daisy. Found in meadows and roadsides. Prefers well drained soils.
<i>Malva moschata</i>	Musk Mallow	30-75	July-September	Likes well drained soil. Very attractive clear pink flowers.
<i>Primula veris</i>	Cowslip	15-25	April -May	Flowers early before the grass has grown too tall.
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal	10-20	June-October	Suits most soil conditions and meadow situations. Attractive ground cover plant. Favourite of bees and butterflies.
<i>Silene alba</i>	White Campion	25-50	May-August	Suits a wide range of soil types.
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion	25-40	April-July	Does well in either a meadow or in shaded woodland or hedgerow.
PERENNIAL AND BIENNIAL SPECIES FOR WOODLANDS				
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove	30-120	June-August	Excellent bee plant. Likes sun or shade. Prefers well drained soil.
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose	20	March-May	Well known favourite, yellow scented flowers. Grows well in shade.
PERENNIAL AND BIENNIAL SPECIES FOR WATER MARGINS				
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Marsh Marigold	30	March-June	Glossy yellow flowers, also known as King cups. Thrives in wet places.
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Measdownsweet	50-80	June-September	Can be found along streams, ditches and in wet meadows. Sweet fragrant flowers.
<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	Yellow Flag Iris	40-150	May-July	Will grow in up to 15cms of water
<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>	Ragged Robin	30-50	June-August	Particularly suits moist or moisture retentive land. Looks particularly good growing amongst grass in a meadow.
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple Loosestrife	60-100	June-August	Suits rich marshy areas by streams and lakes. It complements Yellow Flag Iris. Prefers full sun.
<i>Mentha aquatica</i>	Water Mint	30-40	June	Tall pink flowers appear in June. Very strong fragrances from all parts of the plant which spreads by long runners. Food plant of the Water Ermine Moth.
<i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>	Water Forget-me-not	20-30	May	Pale blue flowers appear in early May. Particularly suits moist or moisture retentive ground. Will scatter seed around the parent in any bare soil.

