

Speyside Fields for Wildlife encourages gardeners to create mini-meadows. At a local level we can visit your garden and help you choose your meadow site and composition of plants.

The meadow flowers you see in the Speyside Fields for Wildlife sites are not perennial meadows; these are corn annuals which in the past flowered along with grain crops many years ago before the advent of herbicide use.

You can have an annual meadow of corn annuals and it will look lovely in the summer and autumn until the frosts. Pollinators will use it throughout its flowering period. Fertile soil is best and it needs to be re-sown each year.



Annual Meadow

cornflower, corn marigold, corn chamomile, corn poppy, corn cockle. Phacelia, a member of the borage family provides a particularly good nectar source.

Flowering Meadows; Annual or Perennial?

For an annual flower meadow – sow annual wildflower seeds into weed free, fertile soil in spring, it will flower over the summer. Remove weeds and grasses the following early spring, hoe lightly and re-sow with less seed as some seed from last year will be good.

Biennials grow in the first year, flower the second year – eg Foxglove, Viper's bugloss. You can add them to the Annuals seed mix but allow two years for flowering.

A **perennial meadow** of grasses and wildflowers provides a longer term home for a greater range of wildlife. The Perennial mixture prefers soil which is NOT fertile as this favours the flowers over the grasses.

Ideally, the new perennial meadow should be sown on bare soil that is not rich in fertility. There are different seed mixes for different conditions - damp and shady or dry and sunny for example. Scotia Seeds offer a variety of mixes and can also tailor to your wishes. <http://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/seed-mixtures/>
It's worth growing a big variety of perennial flowers to see what takes in your patch.

When to sow

You can sow either in late summer/ early autumn or in the spring. Some seeds need a cold spell to germinate such as cowslips. Yellow rattle is a small yellow

annual flower and is a parasite on the roots of grasses so it helps keep them in check. It must be sown in summer/autumn.

If sowing the perennial meadow in spring be sure to water on those hot dry May days. Mixes usually come with a selection of fine grasses - so good for caterpillars of butterflies that feed on grasses. Bird's Foot trefoil is also a great plant for butterflies such as the Common Blue..

"Can I create a meadow in the grass?" is a question we are often asked. It's not ideal but we have one or two sites where we are experimenting with this. Frequent cutting and raking off the grass cuttings first should help to weaken the grasses. Seeds are unlikely to take in a thick sward so plug planting may be an option. You can buy wildflower plug plants from a variety of sources or grow your own from seed in trays and transplanted into small pots or plug plant trays. Some wildflowers like knapweed and oxeye daisy are quite resilient and once established will survive thick grasses. Lawn grasses are usually strong and are often fertilised and it may be difficult to establish a meadow in a well kept lawn. Consider digging it up and starting from scratch...

Whatever you do it will most likely be an improvement for wildlife - just letting sections of grass grow is good for spiders, toads and frogs. Cutting a path through your long grass or meadow makes it look as though it's meant to be and not just "neglect"! You can extend your meadow value by planting drifts of naturalising crocuses, a really valuable source of nectar for bees in those strange hot days we can get at the end of winter. Looks lovely too!

Management of a perennial meadow once established is essential.

For details of how to **Create and Maintain your Perennial Meadow** from scratch it's really worth doing some homework and we suggest having a look at one of the many professional websites offering advice...

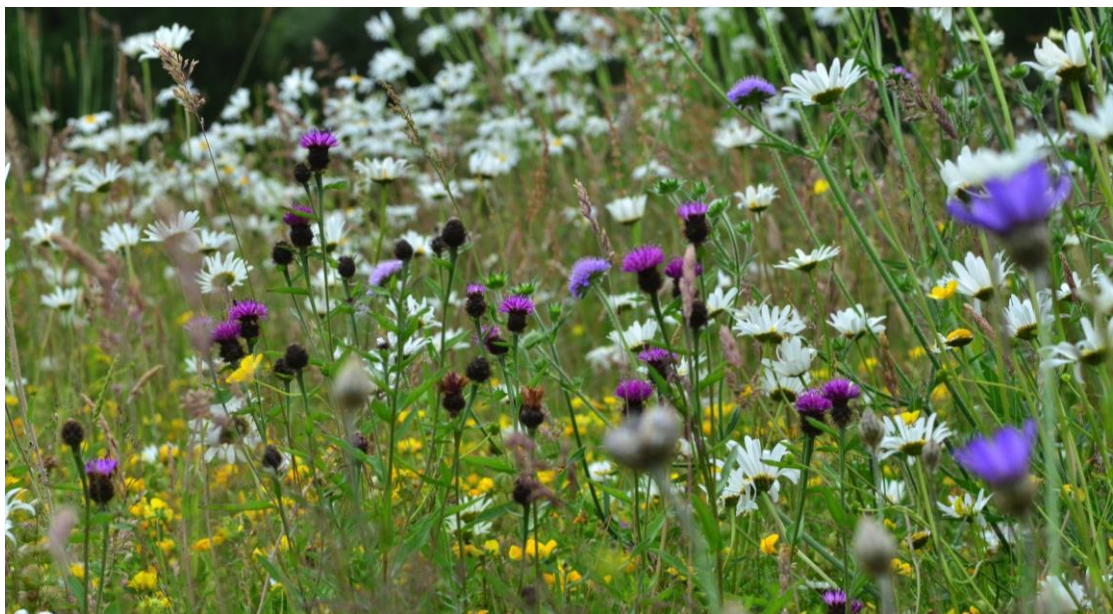
Meadowmania <https://www.meadowmania.co.uk/news/blog/2013/10/20/how-to-create-a-wild-flower-meadow-2/>

Royal Horticultural Society; <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=436>

Scotia Seeds <https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/advice-notes/>



A new perennial meadow vibrant with bird's foot trefoil



Same meadow area later in summer with oxeye daisy, knapweed and field scabious



Naturalising crocuses provide very early nectar



A first summer meadow - predominantly oxeye daisy and purple vetch but other species are establishing.. One deer grazing was absorbed by this large meadow but too many could affect the establishment and variety of plant species.