



How to grow a wild patch

Wildflower

Summer

Spring

Pollinator

Butterfly

Bee

It doesn't matter what size your space is, there's always room for wildflowers! Set aside an area of lawn, part of a border, or even a

large container and watch the bees and butterflies buzz in.

Whether it's a flowerpot, flowerbed, wild patch in your lawn, or entire meadow, planting wildflowers provides vital resources to support a wide range of insects that couldn't survive in urban areas otherwise.



Let nature move in or sow your own wildflower patch; bring a touch of wild to your garden

Option 1 - Let your grass grow long

Long grass, peppered with flowers, is one of the rarest habitats in our well-tended gardens, yet it is incredibly beneficial for wildlife. Patches of long grass encourage different plant species to grow, help insects to thrive, create feeding opportunities for birds, and shelter small mammals.

So simply let nature move in! Set aside some lawn, leaving it to grow, and wait to see what arrives. The less pristine the lawn, the more promising it is for wildlife. Just raise the cutters on your mower to make some paths (it'll look more cared for) and leave the rest of the mowing until July or August after plants have flowered.



Leave your garden wild

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Option 2 - Start from scratch

You can create a wildflower area from scratch on bare ground. Pick a poor patch of ground that hasn't been cultivated recently as wildflower meadows establish best on unproductive soil. It's worth checking what sort of soil you have and its pH before you choose which seeds to sow; wildflower seed merchants supply mixes suitable for various soil types and situations.

If your soil fertility is too high for perennial wildflowers to flourish, consider sowing a cornfield annual mix that includes plants like cornflower, corn poppy, corn marigold and corncockle, with some barley and wheat seed to add an authentic touch!

To create your patch from scratch:

- Control weeds by digging or rotovating, burying any vegetation to a depth of 15-20 cm (6-8 in). This also brings less fertile soil to the surface.
- Firm and rake the surface to make a seedbed.

- Don't be tempted to add manure or fertiliser as this will encourage excessive vigour in the grasses, which then swamp the wildflowers. This is the most important principle in establishing a wildflower meadow.
- Sow in autumn, giving the seed time to settle in over winter. If you are on heavy clay, however, it is better to wait until spring. Even large areas can be sown by hand quite easily.
- Ensure that the seed is scattered evenly by sowing half lengthways and the remaining half widthways across the plot. Mixing the seed with silver sand makes the process easier. Rake in lightly and water thoroughly.



Maintaining your wild patch

During the first year, it is essential to get the mowing regime right. Cut to 5-7 cm (2-2.5 in) whenever the height reaches 10-20 cm (4-8 in). The number of mows required can range from one to four. Control assertive weeds like thistles, nettles and docks by hand-weeding or spot-treating with a wildlife-friendly herbicide.

After this, a couple of cuts a year should be enough: once in late July/early August and then again in early autumn. After mowing, always leave the clippings for a couple of days to drop any seed, then rake up and remove to keep soil fertility down.

Top tips for getting your wild patch right

- Be careful when mowing – small mammals, amphibians and reptiles may be hiding in the grass. Some birds nest in larger meadows, so don't mow until after the beginning of August.
- Wildflowers are available in plug form and in ready-planted turf rolls, which can make establishing the plants even easier.
- Sow a mix of wild grass and wild flower seed.

Suggested plants:

- Common Knapweed - *Centaurea nigra*
- Yellow-rattle - *Rhinanthus minor*
- Ox-eye Daisy - *Leucanthemum vulgare*
- Field Scabious - *Knautia arvensis*
- Harebell - *Campanula rotundifolia*
- Cock's-foot - *Dactylus glomerate*
- Sheep's-fescue - *Festuca ovina*
- Yorkshire-fog - *Holcus lanatus*
- Wild Thyme - *Thymus polytrichus*
- Lady's bedstraw - *Galium verum*
- Chamomile - *Chamaemelum nobile*
- Red Clover - *Trifolium pratense*
- Common Spotted-orchid - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*
- Common Bird's-foot-trefoil - *Lotus corniculatus*
- Bulbous Buttercup - *Bulbous Buttercup*



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