

How to create a mini meadow successfully

The best time to sow a meadow is in the spring but you can also sow meadow seeds in the autumn. One of the most important factors for success is buying good quality seed from a recognised specialist supplier of meadow seeds, either on-line or at a garden centre.

Seeds need the sun to grow so when you are choosing a place to sow your meadow ensure that it has sunshine for a good part of the day. Also you don't have to have soil in your garden to sow the seed you can use large pots or planters filled with imported soil or compost.

The question and answers below will hopefully give you the information you need to create a beautiful meadow area even if it's only a tiny area or it can still make a big impact for people and wildlife!

Also we have added some links at the bottom of this page where you can buy good quality seed and get more information about meadows.

Q Can I sow my seeds over existing grass?

No, Grass will prevent your seeds from growing, you need to prepare a clean weed free seed bed

Q How early and how late can I safely sow annual seeds?

The best month is April but you can sow early in March as long as the ground feels workable and as late as early June for spectacular late flowering displays August onwards.

Q Can I sow an annual meadow in the autumn?

Yes you can but there is a chance some of the new seedlings could be killed off during winter also some of the seeds may not germinate until the following year. You can always sow more flower seeds the following spring.

Q Does the sowing time have an impact on the length of the flowering time?

Every year is different. In general though early sowings will mean your meadow will come into flower earlier and if the summer is very hot and dry they may finish earlier.

Q Do I need to water the seeds?

No, not if they are in open ground but if you have sown seeds in planters or large plant pots which can dry out very quickly you will need to water but don't overdo it if the weather is wet they won't need. But it's really important to roll or firm the seeds into the ground so the seedlings get good contact with the soil and enough moisture. You can firm the seeds into the soil by walking over or pressing down onto the soil with a flat tray – It is best not to do this when the soil is really wet as the soil can become compacted. The seeds will germinate readily as soon as the soil is warm and moist enough.

Q It looks like I just have a blanket of weeds, is there anything I can do?

Unfortunately this sometimes happens, but don't panic. Wait until your weeds are about 150 mm (6 inches) tall and run your mower over the whole area on the highest cut if it's a big area or you can use shears for a smaller area or even pull the weeds out by hand. This checks the weeds and allows the slower growing meadow to come through.

Q My display has been looking great, but in the recent really hot and dry weather the display is starting to go over. Is there anything that I can do?

Most years the displays carry on without a check with later taller flowers masking the shorter earlier ones. Sometimes it's just a question of giving nature a little bit more time. Even if the later flowers are less showy they will still have a lot of sparkle. If really looking tatty you can give them the 'Chelsea chop' which is a very high cut to knock off the seeding flower heads and stimulate a second flush of growth and flowers.

Q What effect will the fertility of my soil have on the display?

Annual Meadows thrive on normal to high fertility soils making them perfect solutions for most gardens and parks. The richer the soil though the taller and bushier the plants will be. Normally if you grow annual meadows on the same patch of ground for more than three years you will see the fertility start to decrease and the emerging meadows look finer and shorter.

Q If I've sown an annual meadow one year will it regrow the next year?

No, not really. Many species won't reseed at all. Some species will but in a much more random and patchy way. If you have a fairly infertile soil though or you have experienced very little weed infestation you can though get some lovely second and third year displays taking place from the few species that do reseed.

Q Can I mix the annual seed with grass to make it go further?

No. Grass is very competitive and will quickly dominate the meadow flowers. If you want to make the mix go further you are better to decrease the sowing rate – but keep the edges close to the paths at the normal rate if you can.

Q Can I mix the annual seed with perennial seed?

No. If you are trying to establish a perennial meadow then do not put annual seeds with the mix. Annuals will very quickly outcompete the slower perennials and create bare patches.