

Wildflowers are an important part of everyone's heritage, and a vital living link with the countryside. Many of our wildflowers are specific to particular areas, soil types or climates. Growing wildflowers is an excellent way of attracting wildlife to your school garden. They provide food plants for butterfly larvae, pollen and nectar to attract bees, butterflies and other insects, and seeds to help feed birds and small mammals in winter.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Foundation Stage
1,2,4,6

Science

KS1 – SC1, SC2, SC3

KS2 – SC1, SC2, SC3

KS3 – SC1, SC2

KS4 – SC1

PSHE & Citizenship

KS1 – 1ac, 2abcegh, 3a, 5abcd

KS2 – 1c, 2ahj, 3a, 4a, 5ade

HOW TO GROW Wildflowers

Many wildflowers are pretty enough to be part of a mixed flower border. In a shady spot you could try foxglove, primrose, bluebell, bugle and snowdrop. In a sunny spot geranium, knapweed, scabious, soapweed and toadflax should thrive. Meadowsweet, meadow buttercup, globe flower and lady's smock like damp conditions, while annuals such as corn poppies, corn marigold and cornflower need open, cultivated soil, without much competition from other plants.

Containers give you the chance to mimic different habitats. Use a very sandy compost to grow sea-cliff plants such as sea pink, sea campion and wild carrot, or create a bog container and grow marsh marigolds, water mint and flowering rush.

One of our most endangered wildflower habitats is old meadows, where a medley of flowers thrive among a range of grasses. Many of these have taken hundreds of years to develop and are very specific to local soil conditions. They cannot be entirely recreated, but you can produce very attractive meadow-style plantings that will support a range of wildlife.

A flowery lawn is cut regularly except for a few weeks in May or June so plants must tolerate mowing eg bird's foot trefoil, daisy, mouse-ear hawkweed, and self-heal. Spring-flowering meadows are cut in July and November; suitable plants include cowslip, ox-eye daisy and stitchwort. Summer-flowering meadows are cut in April and November so catsear, lady's bedstraw, meadow vetchling, scabious and red clover are good choices.

If you have a suitable area of grass, the simplest way to produce a meadow is to stop mowing and see what develops, then add to this with plants (which you can raise from seed) or bulbs. Don't try scattering seed directly into established grass as it will not be able to compete. As far as possible, choose plants appropriate to your locality.

To start from scratch, sow a grass and wildflower mixture direct onto bare earth. This is most likely to succeed if the soil is infertile – rich soils encourage too many coarse grasses and unwanted weeds. Sow

your seed in the spring (March-May) or in autumn (September-October). It is best to buy seed from the UK, not from Europe or other origins, as UK seed is likely to perform better here, and is less likely to disrupt the natural species balance of your area.

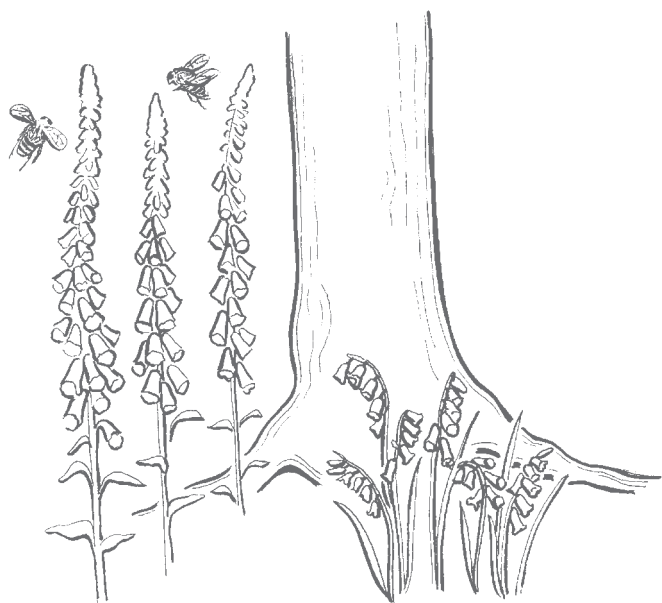
First remove any existing vegetation in the area by cutting and digging or treating with a weedkiller based on glyphosate which will kill the roots but not persist in the soil. If the soil is rich, scrape off the top layer, which will also help remove weed seeds.

At least 3 weeks later, break up the soil by hand cultivating, then treading it down or using a light roller. Don't add any fertiliser.

Sow your seed lightly and evenly, spreading it out so that you have approximately one gram of seed per square metre. Often, wildflower seeds are so small it can be difficult to see where you have already sown, so mix your seeds with a little fine sand to make it more obvious. Lightly rake the seeds into the soil and pat them down. Wildflower seeds do not germinate as readily as cultivated plants and some may not grow until the following year. Some species (like the clustered bellflower and cowslip) require a cold spell before they will germinate.

A young meadow will require regular weeding. This will reduce as it becomes established, but it will still need occasional attention to keep the plants in balance. Mow the area at least 3 times in the first year, to a height of about 5cm. If you have planted in a shady area, allow natural mosses and ferns to grow, too. Many wildflower mixes contain annuals such as poppies and ox-eye daisies that will flower in the first year, but then tend to die out. Perennials may take a season or two to flower, but will then last for many years.

Add woodland flowers to shady spots



A flowery lawn is easy to manage



Use containers to create special habitats



A summer meadow is a magnet for wildlife



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information on wildflowers local to your own area contact: **FLORA FOR FAUNA** ☎ 01747 811778

www.nhm.ac.uk/science/projects/fff **PLANTLIFE – THE WILD-PLANT CONSERVATION CHARITY** ☎ 020 7808 0100

www.plantlife.org.uk **THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS** ☎ 01636 677711 www.wildlifetrusts.org

These specialist nurseries sell a wide range of wildflowers: **BTCV ENTERPRISES** ☎ 01302 572200 www.btcv.org (seeds, bulbs and plants) **JOHN CHAMBERS** ☎ 01933 652562 (seeds, bulbs and plants) **EMORSGATE SEEDS** ☎ 01553 829028 www.wildseed.co.uk (seeds) **LANDLIFE WILDFLOWERS** ☎ 0151 737 1819 www.wildflower.org.uk (seeds and plants)

NATURAL SURROUNDINGS ☎ 01263 711091 www.hartlana.co.uk (seeds, bulbs and plants)

NATURESCAPE BRITISH WILD FLOWERS ☎ 01949 860592 www.naturescape.co.uk (seeds, bulbs, plants)

SUFFOLK HERBS ☎ 01376 572456 www.suffolkherbs.com (seeds and plants)

YELLOW FLAG WILDFLOWERS ☎ 01452 311525 (seeds, bulbs, plants)

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