

How to make a meadow with native wild flowers

Even if you only have a small area, you can enjoy a meadow full of native wild flowers. Your local wildlife will thank you for it. All you have to do is mow differently...

Choose an open, sunny area for your meadow, with no nettles or brambles. Then take a closer look in spring and summer – what's already growing there?

A good meadow can be home to more than 100 different grasses and flowers.

If your area is bare ground or has fewer than five wild flowers



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If your area has more than five different wild flowers already



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CREATE a meadow

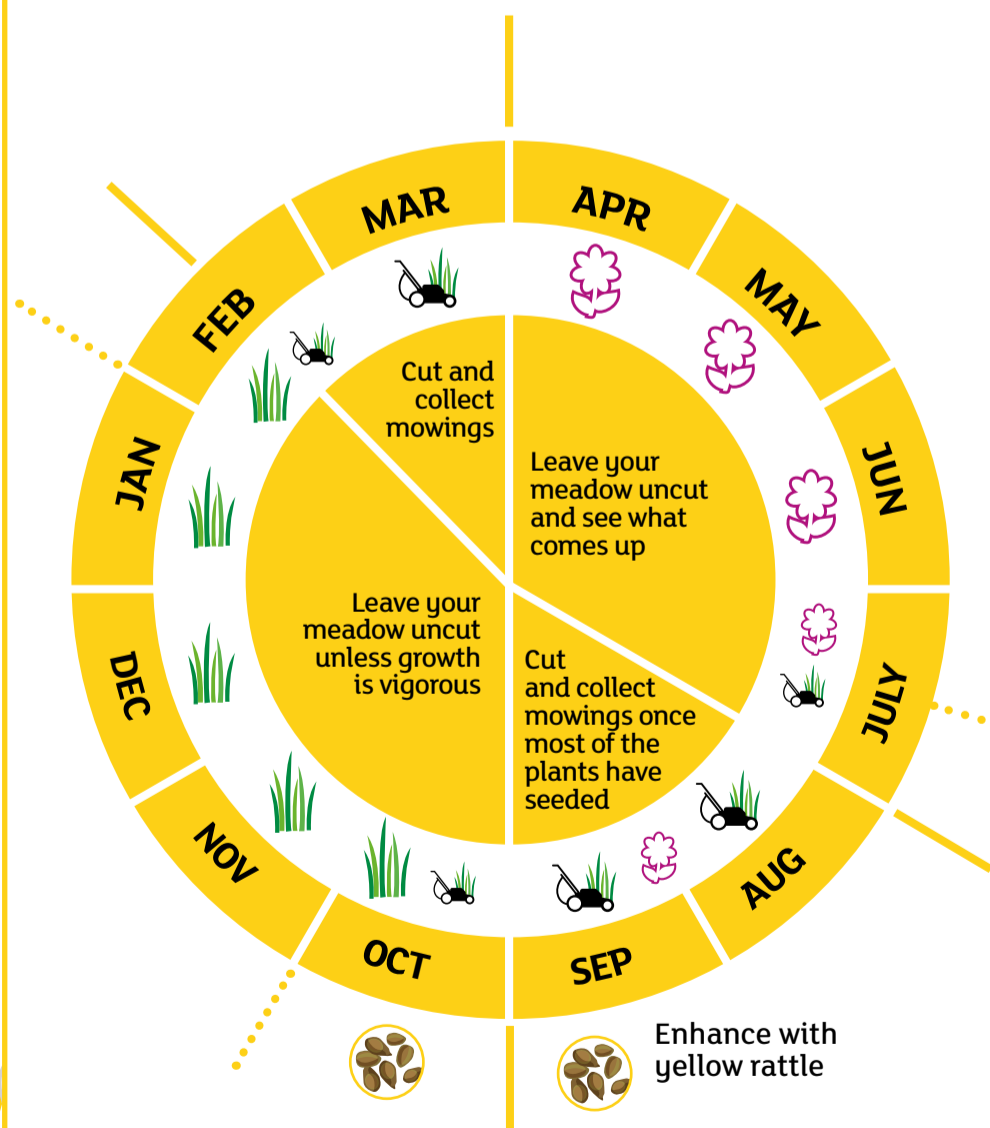
In late summer or early autumn, cut the grass short, create bare ground and seed the area

- You'll need a mower, strimmer or scythe and a rake to collect the mowings because if left, they will decompose and enrich the soil with nutrients. Wild flowers thrive in nutrient-poor soil.
- You can compost the mowings or create [habitat piles](#) to encourage other wildlife.
- Create at least 50% bare ground by raking vigorously or by using a hand scarifier that can be rented. [Larger areas](#) are best done with a harrow.
- If you have a larger area and know a local farmer, you can seed the area using [green hay](#).
- Or you can buy native wildflower seeds from your local seed supplier. Double-check the seed is not sourced from outside the UK. Read ['Keeping the wild in wildflower'](#) to find out more.
- Try mixing your seed with sand for easier spreading. Sprinkle and gently trample in. During dry spells, water if possible, but don't wash away the seeds!
- In the coming months, pull up any creeping thistle and dock, or cut the flower heads off before they set seed. These can spread fast and smother wild flowers.
- Don't worry if your meadow looks a bit plain in its first year. Many native perennials take a couple of years to establish.

From the second year onwards follow the annual management plan

ENHANCE a meadow

If you already have some wild flowers present, simply follow the annual plan below to see even more flowers return over time



 Mow
  Grow
  No mow

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Top tips

Vary the cuts

- Skip the spring cut if you can see wild flowers growing
- Avoid heavy machinery if the site is very wet
- Try varying your cutting time from year to year or cut part of the meadow in July and the rest in later months
- If you can, leave mowings lying for a week for all the seeds to drop before removing
- If the grass is growing vigorously over winter, you can do an extra cut and collect if the ground is not too wet
- After a few years, your grass might start growing less vigorously and you may be able to stick with one annual cut only in late summer
- Some areas or margins can be left uncut over the winter – these are great for hibernating insects and mammals, and provide seed for birds

Enhance with yellow rattle

- In the second year after cutting the meadow, consider sowing yellow rattle seeds. This plant grows off grass roots, reducing vigorous grassy growth and creating more space for wild flowers

Enjoy your meadow...

Why not try a meadow celebration event, [seed collecting](#) or [scything](#) demonstrations? Or yoga in the meadow, wildflower painting or photography? Anyone can take part in the [Great British Wildflower Hunt](#) or the [UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme](#).



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Wild flowers to encourage in your meadow



Oxeye daisy
Leucanthemum vulgare



Common sorrell
Rumex acetosa



Cat's-ear
Hypochaeris radicata



Red clover
Trifolium pratense



Common knapweed
Centaurea nigra



Bird's-foot trefoil
Lotus corniculatus



Yarrow
Achillea millefolium



Yellow rattle
Rhinanthus minor