

5 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD BE PLANTING A WILDFLOWER MEADOW



Have you ever driven past a field full of flowers and wished you could create something similar at home? Wildflower meadows have been popular for decades in the UK but are now starting to increase in popularity in Australia, and there is no wonder why, they are simply spectacular to look at, but they also have many benefits. Here are five reasons why you should consider growing a wildflower meadow in your own garden.

Benefits of growing a wildflower meadow:

- ☐ Good for the pollinators: Unfortunately, bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects are under increasing threat due to pesticides, parasites, and urbanisation. By planting flowers, you are providing pollen and nectar for beneficial insects to feed on. We personally just love watching these little busy creatures go about their business buzzing around the garden too!
- ☐ Good for your garden: Many of our food crops rely on fertilisation from pollinators to fruit. By growing an abundance of flowers nearby you are encouraging these pollinators to visit your garden resulting in pollination of your food crops while they are there.
- ☐ Nice to look at: Wildflowers flower at different times throughout the year meaning your meadow colours and smells will change throughout the seasons. Gardening has also been linked to many mental health benefits.
- ☐ Less maintenance: Lawns have been a mainstay of Australian homes for generations, but with our ever-changing climate and busy schedules, many are turning to wildflower meadows instead of the traditional lawn. Once established a wildflower meadow will mostly look after itself, many varieties, especially natives require very little water or fertiliser too. Wildflower meadows are particularly useful for

covering steep or sloping land where conventional gardening or mowing may be too difficult.

- ❑ Suppresses weeds and improves soil ecology: Growing taller plants such as wildflowers can shade out common weeds found in lawns such as bindies and as plants mature and die off, they return organic matter to your soil.

How to grow a wildflower meadow?

- ❑ Choose your site: Most wildflowers require a sunny position to thrive, so choose an area that receives at least 8 hours of sun each day.
- ❑ Prepare the site: Whilst it may sound like a good idea to just cultivate your area and throw out some seeds, setting up your wildflower meadow for success does require some forward planning. When you cultivate any spot to bare ground you are essentially triggering the growth of weeds whose job it is to cover bare soil. Your meadow seeds are unlikely to outcompete vigorous weeds, so we suggest preparing your soil by removing existing vegetation and the top layer of soil and covering the area with dark plastic or cardboard to kill off any weed seeds living within the remaining soil. Ideally, you would leave the area covered for an entire season (3 months, usually over Winter) after which you should have a blank canvas to start growing your meadow.

There are other options to speed up the process such as covering the area with cardboard then adding min 5cm of quality weed-free soil mix (sourced from a reputable supplier that meets Australian standards). This will then allow you to start sowing sooner whilst suppressing weeds and giving your seeds a good base in which to set root.

You may be tempted to spray the area with herbicide, although effective, may be harmful to the pollinators you are trying to attract, so if this is your only option, we suggest spraying in Winter when there are fewer flowers around, and pollinators are less active.

- ❑ Start your seeds in trays: We suggest using a mixture of direct sowing and seedling plugs to get your meadow started, so while you wait for your soil to be ready, you can start sowing seeds into punnets or Jiffy pellets to establish some seedlings ready to plant out when the time is ready.



- ☐ Wait for suitable weather to plant: The perfect planting day would be warm with light rain on the horizon. Plant out when the soil is warm and contains moisture. Start by planting your seedlings, then scatter seeds between the plants and lightly rake them in. Finish off with a light sprinkling of water.



We advise against using mulch on your planting area as this will most likely result in poor germination of the seeds you sow.

- ☐ Keep on top of weeds: As your meadow establishes itself, you will need to keep on top of any weeds that may pop up.
- ☐ Keep planting: The fun has just begun! Once your meadow has established itself, you can start adding more varieties. Keep a diary of what has grown well and what hasn't so that you can seek out varieties to complement the strongest growers. Taking regular photos is also a great idea so you can see what varieties are flowering in each season.



What flowers can I plant in a wildflower meadow?

Although called 'wildflower meadows', they don't have to be made up solely of local flower species. Natives are preferred, but any flower that looks and acts like a wildflower in your area is suitable.

Some popular wildflower meadow seed varieties to sow are:

Natives such as: Everlastings, Billy Button, Kangaroo Paw, Swan River Daisy, Coral Creeper, Native iris, Strawflower/paper daisy, Sturt pea, and Fringed Lily.

Exotic species suitable for a wildflower meadow include: Agastache, Borage, Cornflower, Cosmos, Nigella, Coneflower, Daisies, Marigold, Calendula, Poppies, Alyssum, Sage and Nemophila.

