

Grass and Meadows



The traditional view of a beautiful garden includes a closely mown lawn to complement the plants but this has very little value to wildlife. You may have heard of "No Mow May" which encourages people to leave their lawns unmown for a month to allow wild flowers to grow. It is even better if you can have even a small patch of long grass through the spring and summer.

Long grass provides a habitat for many invertebrates and provides cover for larger animals like frogs. If you can introduce some wild flowers into the grass it can look very attractive especially if paths are mown around it so it becomes a feature. If you have the space a larger meadow area can be very attractive as in the photos below. In the spring you can have spring bulbs and wild flowers such as Cowslips and Primroses. Later on there can be a succession of wild flowers.



Whether you have a small patch or a larger meadow the preparation is the same. It is not necessary to clear the ground, in fact this encourages weeds like nettles which like disturbed ground. Just scrape (scarify) the grass so that there are bare patches of soil. Scatter the wild flower seed on the patches and stamp it in. The seed you use is important. Many packets of meadow seed contain mostly grass seed. If you buy from a good supplier

like Emorsgate you will get just flower seed. Try to find seed containing Yellow Rattle which is parasitic on grass and reduces the vigour of the grass giving the wild flowers a chance. As it is an annual it can be mown off the other parts of the lawn so the grass is not affected. I was advised to plant a mixture of annual corn field flowers and perennials. In the first year the annuals will flower and the next year you will have perennials and some



annuals. Alternatively you can buy plug plants of wild flowers to go in the bare spots. Meadows should not be cut between March and early Autumn. Small patches are easy to cut using normal garden equipment but larger meadows are more difficult and you may need to learn the ancient skill of scything, a new challenge!