

GOING TO SEED

MAKING A
BIODIVERSE
LAWN

Benefits of a diverse sward

- Increasing worm numbers
- Increasing the rate of soil organic matter accumulation
- Deep rooting species improve soil structure
- Increasing the sward resilience to unseasonal and extreme weather
- Providing foraging resources for pollinators throughout the season
- Less mowing needed

Getting started

- Cut on lowest setting (scalp!) in autumn to expose patches of bare soil.
- Sow hemi-parasitic wildflowers such as yellow rattle which will reduce grass vigour.
- Encourage deep rooting species such as plantain, dock and chicory to improve soil structure - thistles and nettles for wildlife...
- Don't mow until late summer. Rake up and remove cut material to compost to reduce nutrients available in soil.
- Add wildflower seed in autumn year 2/3 if you want to boost diversity - or allow to develop naturally. Mix with sand as carrier.
- Mow paths and sitting areas to frame the wildness.

Useful resources: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardening-for-the-environment/low-carbon-gardening/grow-a-low-carbon-meadow>

Meadow management

- Avoid cutting between spring and late July or August to allow flowers and seed to develop
- Take a hay cut to around 5cm high in August. Leave the cut material on the ground for a week to shed seeds before raking up and taking away.
- Mow through autumn to keep regrowth short.
- Repeat and you will see increased diversity over several years as nutrient levels decrease.
- Weed real invasives by hand if you can't tolerate them.
- If seeding with additional wildflowers grass should be stripped off and ground raked until at least 50% bare ground prior to seeding. For the following year the grass should be kept short to allow the flower seeds space to develop.

Wildflower seeds

Yellow rattle (*Rhianthus minor*) is an annual, seed is scattered in autumn as it needs a cold period to germinate. Eyebright (*Euphrasia nemorosa*) is a less vigorous alternative best suited to calcareous soils. If the hay cut is too early, these plants won't get a chance to go to seed and will not return the next year.

Red Bartsia (*Vernus odontitis*) and Yellow Bartsia (*Parentucellia viscosa*), Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*) and Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*) along with Common cow wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*) are all native grassland species which parasitise grass. It may be tricky to buy seed, but you could try collecting some – with the landowners permission.



Useful resources: <https://wildseed.co.uk/product-category/mixtures/wild-flower-only-mixtures/>