

# PLANTING THE WILDFLOWER GARDEN OF YOUR DREAMS IN 5 EASY STEPS!

As many experienced gardeners are aware, planting wildflower seed is a relatively simple task; but it is not completely effortless. Like any worthwhile gardening project, the more time and effort that you are willing and able to allot to proper preparation, the more successful the results are likely to be.

The following steps are designed to assist the wildflower gardener in establishing a flower meadow that will impress and inspire for years to come.

We take great pride in our wildflower seeds and all of our products have been tested for high germination rates and purity. We stand by the quality of our seeds, but please know that failure to follow the instructions provided can have unsatisfactory and/or unpredictable results.

Please contact us if you have any additional questions about planting or care of your wildflowers.



## ONE CHOOSE YOUR SEASON

It is a pleasant surprise for many gardeners to learn that Flower & Wildflower seed can be successfully installed at various times throughout the growing season. Though spring is the most common and conventional time of the year to sow flower seed; successful results can also be achieved by planting in summer and fall as well. This seasonal versatility is a great advantage to the flower & wildflower gardener and brings many diverse benefits and possibilities.

**SPRING PLANTING:** For most temperate regions of the United States, spring planting is best carried out within a month or so after the final frost of the winter season. The exact date will naturally vary based on your region and the severity of the winter season. The important thing is to not "jump the gun" and plant too early; if seeds are installed prior to a late-season frost, they will be lost for the season and will need to be re-seeded.

**SUMMER PLANTING:** Summer planting is advisable for cooler regions where temperatures don't hover at or above 80 degrees for long periods of time. In warmer zones, spring planting is recommended.

**FALL PLANTING:** Though it may seem unusual to plant flower seeds in fall, it is actually the preferred time of year for many seasoned wildflower gardeners. The main benefit: a jump-start in bloom the following spring! However, if you do decide to plant your seeds in the fall, the trick is to do so after the first killing frost of the season. Fall plantings are most successful in cooler regions and for annual/perennial mixes.

**NOTE:** For All Perennial Mix, a late summer or early fall planting is recommended, once temperatures have started to cool but with your first expected frost still a few weeks out.



## TWO CHOOSE YOUR SITE

It may sound obvious enough, but choosing the most advantageous site on your property is a very important determinant in the eventual success of your wildflower meadow. The most important factors to consider in this regard are the amount of average daily sunlight, the relative quality of the soil, and the accessibility to a water source like a hose or a sprinkler.



Though many wildflowers do tolerate some filtered shade — and a few actually thrive in it — the vast majorities are definitely sun-lovers and will likely demonstrate the strongest bloom where exposure is greatest. Therefore, the general rule of thumb when considering the optimum planting site on your property is "the more sun the better". This means that areas with little or no tree coverage and as little obstruction from any structure such as a house, garage, or barn are best.

Soil too is sometimes a consideration when planting flowers, but it's important to keep in mind that wildflowers will generally sprout in all but the most difficult conditions. This means that pampering your site with fertilizer or rich compost is not usually necessary. In fact, doing so can sometimes achieve the opposite result by inviting unwanted weeds and grasses. Only in the poorest of conditions, where the soil is literally sterile, is using an accelerant advisable.

Lastly, when choosing the best site for your seed installation, the availability of a steady watering source is helpful, but not usually necessary. In most regions and during most seasons, natural rainfall will be sufficient to provide the water necessary for a successful bloom. However, if you live in a particularly arid region, are planting during drier months, or are simply experiencing prolonged drought, it will definitely be to your advantage to water your site every other day or so for the first few weeks after planting until root growth is established.



### THREE

## DETERMINE YOUR DESIRED COVERAGE

If there's one thing we've learned after almost three decades of consulting with wildflower gardeners, it's that there is no perfect answer for how much seed is required to create the perfect wildflower meadow. The reason for this, of course, is that each "wild" gardener has his or her own particular ideas about how a meadow should look. Though some choose to create a sparse "meadow" look, most others prefer a denser stand of wildflowers that will dazzle and delight come bloom time. Whichever effect suits your taste and budget, remember to always keep in mind that you are, after all, creating a "wild" flower garden and that the same yardstick used for hybrid flowers, herbs, vegetables, etc. does not apply.

We have constructed the following chart to provide a general guide to seeding rates. It should be noted that our recommended rates are admittedly higher than many of our competitors. Is that just because we want to sell more seed, you ask? Well, of course we're in the business of selling seed, but the real basis of our recommendations comes from our customers, who have told us for decades that they usually prefer to spend a little more money for a lot more color. After all, most folks that have undertaken a wildflower planting have allotted a considerable portion of their property to the project and naturally want to see lush, and season-long, results.

One other note to keep in mind when deciding how much seed is required for your project is that there is considerable variance between species and mixtures. We generally recommend one standard seeding rate for all wildflower mixtures (see below), while the rates for species will vary widely (see individual species pages on our site).

AMOUNT	RECOMMENDED COVERAGE	FOR THE GEOMETRICAL CHALLENGED
Ounce	Up to 250 ft <sup>2</sup>	A Master Bedroom
1/4 lb	250–500 ft <sup>2</sup>	A Living Room
1 lb	500–1,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	A Suburban Front Yard
5 lbs	5,000–10,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	Up to about 1/4 Acre
10 lbs	10,000–20,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	Up to about 1/2 Acre
25 lbs	25,000–50,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	Ample coverage of 1 Acre
50 lbs	50,000–100,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	Ample coverage up to 2 Acres

### FOUR

## CLEAR EXISTING GROWTH & LOOSEN THE SOIL

This is an absolutely vital step in the installation of any successful wildflower seed project. Though it may sound tempting to randomly cast your seeds into thin air and hope they will sprout, it is simply a waste of time and money to do so on a site that has not been properly prepared for planting. Though wildflower seeds are tenacious by nature —and a few might even persevere under the most inhospitable of circumstances—they, like all seeds, will perform best when rid of noxious weeds and grasses.

There are several ways to effectively remove existing growth and cultivate your soil, and the size of the site will typically be the deciding factor in which method is ultimately chosen. For smaller sites, a rake, hoe, or shovel is often sufficient to do the trick of removing unwanted grass, weeds, etc., while for larger sites, a roto-tiller is often the preferred method. Regardless of what tool or machine is used, the important thing to remember is that the more growth that can be removed, and the more the soil can be loosened, the better the environment for which your seeds to ultimately thrive. Of course, also keep in mind that, after all, these are "wild" flowers, not roses, and so naturally there will be competition from weeds and grasses. The bottom line is: work the soil as best you can, but don't panic when some weeds sprout along with the flowers!



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### FIVE

## SOW YOUR SEED!



So now you've got some sweat on your brow and you're ready to plant! There are many effective installation techniques, but again, the size of the project will probably determine which makes the most sense for you. The two methods that are probably most advisable for the home-owner are: 1) the old fashioned hand-broadcast method (for smaller jobs); and 2) the use of a rotary or "cyclone" seeder (for larger jobs). The former involves simply scattering the seed evenly over the site by hand, while the latter accomplishes the same results through the use of a hand-cranked spreader that can be purchased relatively cheaply at any garden center.

Regardless of which sowing method you choose, we strongly recommend mixing your seed with regular "sand box" sand at a ratio of about 5 parts (sand) to 1 part (seed). This allows for a more even distribution and also provides a convenient way to mark which portions of the site have been seeded and which have not. This is not a required method for a successful planting, but most will find it a simple, affordable, and practical step.

After sowing, we recommend that you lightly compress your seeds into the soil — no more than a 1/2 inch — so as to protect them from birds, wind disbursement, etc. The key here is to compress them, but not bury them. If the site is of a manageable size, you can accomplish this by simply walking over the portion that's just been seeded, or if it's a larger area, you might want to use a standard seed roller; often used when planting grass seed.



## NOW, YOU'RE FINISHED!

It's time to kick back and watch the "seeds" of your labor take root. It is important to remember that our wildflower mixes include a wide range of varieties that will ideally bloom at slightly different times, to give you the widest range of color for the longest season possible. Most wildflowers will bloom in spring and summer but a few varieties will bloom into the fall as well.

Perennial varieties will only show limited germination in their first season after planting, but will bloom to their full potential in the following growing season.