Hello all,

Many thanks for coming along on Saturday, it was great to see so many people with an interest in wildflower meadows! I wrote this blog post about creating a wildflower meadow a while ago on my website (<https://www.seilich.co.uk/the-still>) and thought I’d share it here, along with some resources that I mentioned on the day (seed mixes, suppliers and interesting websites etc)! If you want to get in touch, my email is info@seilich.co.uk.

**Resources**

**S**eed suppliers:

<https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/> actually based in Angus not Fife, but still an excellent supplier of wildflower seed of Scottish provenance.

<https://wildseed.co.uk/> Emorsgate wildflower seed supplier based in Norfolk but excellent quality seed of UK provenance and very knowledgeable staff (also great management advice on the website)

Plug plant suppliers:

<https://www.naturescape.co.uk/product-category/wildflower-plants/>

Bulb suppliers:

<https://www.naturescape.co.uk/product-category/wildflower-plants/>

Suggested seed mixes:

Excellent general purpose mix providing nectar source throughout the longest stretch of the year possible! <https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/urban-pollinator-mix/>

For those you enjoy a no-mow-may type of meadow, where you can keep it as a useable lawn throughout most of the year but allow it to flower and provide a nectar source for a month or two, a flowering lawn mix is perfect: <https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/flowering-lawn-mix/>

For shady/woodland edge spots: <https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/woodland-mix/>

To diversify existing grassland (using the scarifying approach): <https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/bee-bird-butterfly-mix/>

For a quick burst of colour – good for engagement with children, for flower borders and public spaces (note: this mixture doesn’t contain any grasses at all, just ‘flowers’: <https://www.scotiaseeds.co.uk/shop/get-nectar-rich-quick-mix/>

Good websites:

<http://www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk/>

East Linton sits within one of Buglife’s B-Lines, so by creating wildflower meadows in this area you’ll be contributing to something much bigger! Share information about your meadow on the B-Lines website. <https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/>

General wildlife friendly gardening advice <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/gardeningadvice/>

Books:

The Wildflower Key by Frances Rose <https://www.nhbs.com/the-wild-flower-key-book>

**Blog post - Creating a Wildflower Meadow in 10 Steps**

1

Be honest about your needs as a gardener and what your expectations are – are you willing to limit yourself to native/naturalised species (which are beautiful but perhaps not as showy/attractive as some exotic species)?  Are you willing to wait (perhaps a few years) for a perennial meadow to establish or would you rather a quick return of annuals? Would you value a wildflower area of natural species composition (i.e. heavy on grasses) or are you looking for an area of pure wildflowers? Do you have an area you can take back to bare soil and sow a seed mix or do you want to improve the biodiversity value of an existing garden area, in which case plug plants might be a better choice.  Do you have young children and worry about trampling/or perhaps you just want to retain your lawn, in which case a flowering lawn might be right up your street.

2

Check your conditions – before investigating seed mixes, check out your site conditions.  It’s so easy to get seduced by pictures of beautiful looking flowers and meadows but factors such as soil type, fertility, shade levels and the presence of perennial weeds will all impact which species will successfully grow in your site.

3

Buy your seeds from a good (local) supplier of wildflower seed/plants.  Wherever possible buy seed that is adapted to your local conditions – a good seed company will be able to tell you exactly where their seed has come from (check out Scotia Seeds and Emorsgate for example).  Seed that has come from plants grown in a climate similar to your own will be much better adapted to them, and therefore will have a greater chance of surviving and thriving!

4

Preparation is key!  As tempting as it is to buy wildflower seed and sow it immediately, removing existing vegetation, eliminating perennial weeds and preparing the soil bed are all key to a successful wildflower area. If you have the time it can be really worthwhile to think long term - remove existing vegetation in the autumn/winter, allow any ‘weeds’ in the seed bed to emerge in early spring (which can be hand pulled/sprayed depending on preference, or alternatively use a sheet mulch during this time to kill them off), prepare your seed bed (till/rake the area) and then sow.

5

Management.  Once the seed is sown you may be tempted to think your work is done but be prepared to manage the meadow as it establishes.  In the first year, if a particular species begins to dominate (particularly those not present in the seed mix) cutting and raking off the developing vegetation can help to give other species a chance.  Hand pulling or spot spraying weedy species is also essential where these species were not eliminated in the preparation phase. Once established your meadow will need cutting and the arisings removing once a year after seed has set (usually late summer/early autumn).

6

Wait!!!! All too often I see wildflower areas ‘failing’ in the first year and people giving up on them because the beautiful diverse meadow shown on the picture of the seed packet/website looks more like a weed infested wasteland.  But don’t give up! Wildflower areas can take many years to fully establish. Some of the seed within the seed mix will need to vernalise (that is go through a winter of frosts) before they will germinate (this is true of the parasite yellow rattle, added to seed mixes to reduce the dominance of competitive grasses) and therefore you won’t even see these species till year two. Land that has received large quantities of fertilisers will take several years for fertility levels to return to normal and competitive species to gradually retreat.  Where perennial weeds are dominant, hand pulling before they set seed will reap rewards the following year and year after that. Allowing nature time to decide what should be growing where in your meadow, rather than expecting seed to thrive exactly where they are placed by human hand, will take time. Don’t give up! Work with nature at its own pace and you will reap the rewards!

7

Don’t be afraid to ask for help from a professional.  A good botanist often loves the challenge of identifying young plants.  A young meadow may look to an untrained eye like a boring grassy patch, however a good botanist will be able to tell you whether your establishing meadow is looking diverse and healthy (by spying small/juvenile plants) or if it needs some work.  Knowing what to weed and what to leave can also be a challenge to many, again entrusting the help of a good botanist/gardener can help.

8

Don’t give up.  There are always going to be members of society that can not appreciate the value of your wildlife garden, you may get comments about untidiness or allowing ‘weeds’ to thrive.  It’s not always easy, putting your concern for wildlife before concern for what others think is no mean feat but stay strong! You’re doing an amazing thing for wildlife.

9

If a meadow is not for you consider other ways to increase the biodiversity value of your patch.  Planting nectar rich border plants, window boxes and hanging baskets, shrubs, and trees can all make a difference, as can adding ponds, compost heaps, dead wood and bee hotels.  Even being a lazy gardener can make a world of difference e.g. leaving parts of your lawn unmown can allow lawn plants to flower. Don’t feel that unless you have a large area to convert to a wildflower meadow or similar you have failed your furry flying friends!  Check out online [this online resource](https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/gardeningadvice/) for ideas.

10

Enjoy!  Get up close and personal with your garden; take some time to settle in amongst the grasses (hopefully tall and strong by now!) and notice who comes to visit.  Get to know your pollinators and you will feel incredibly rewarded when you start to see the abundance of species visiting your patch. If you want to put a name to a face, conservation bodies such as Buglife, The Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, the Wildlife Trust and Plantlife can help you get to know your pollinators and the wildflowers on which they depend.

**Contact Sally at Seilich (****info@seilich.co.uk****) for advice in setting up your own wildlife friendly area. Seilich works with school groups, community gardens and private individuals to create wildflower meadows, as well as designing and advising on increasing the biodiversity value of gardens/outdoor spaces.**