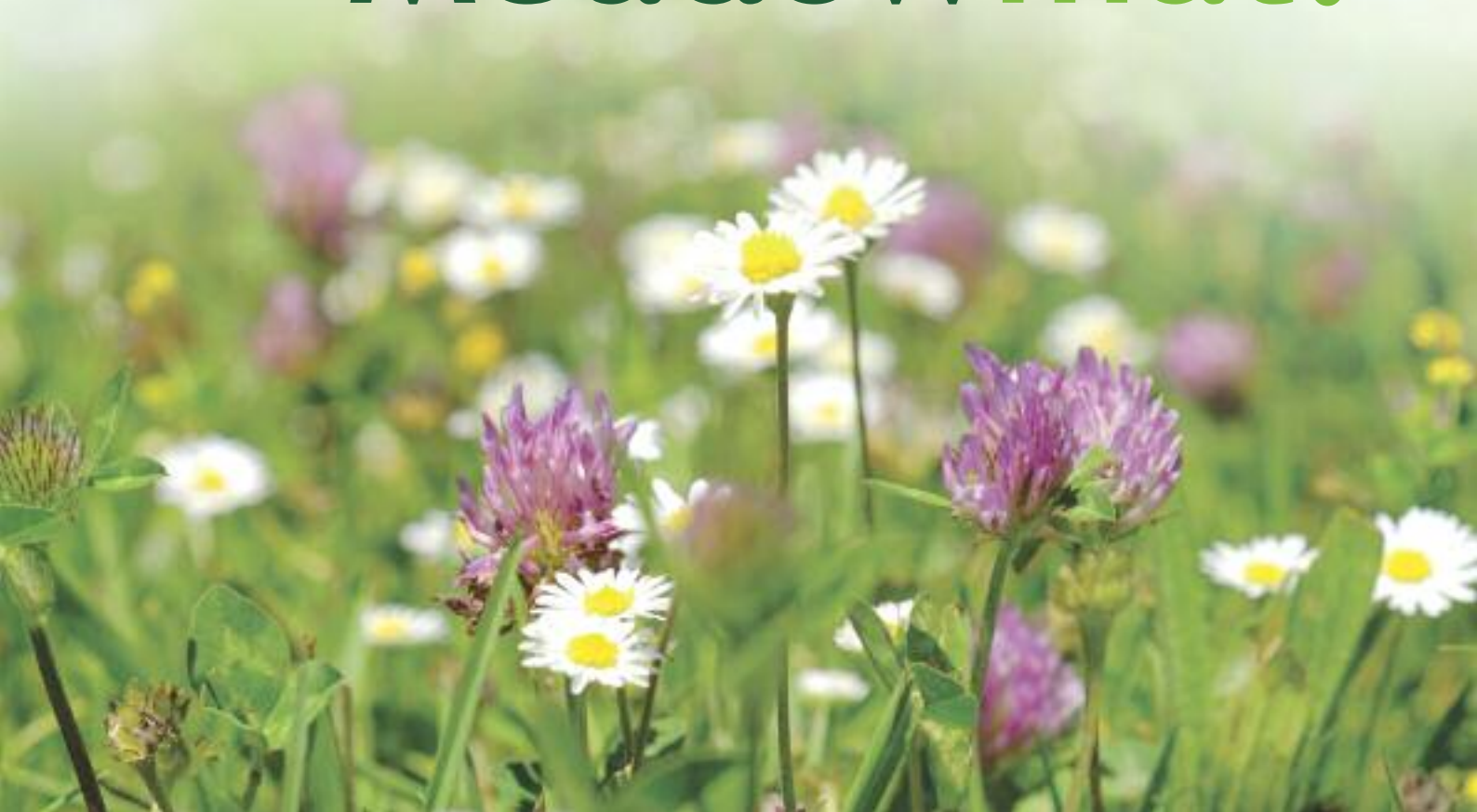




**Meadowmat.**







# Bring back wildflower meadows

Since the Second World War, 98% of the UK's wildflower meadows have disappeared; a loss of a source of food and shelter to countless species of insects, birds, invertebrates and small mammals.

If every gardener in the UK were to turn just 10% of their acreage into wildflower meadow, we could reinstate 10,000 acres of butterfly habitat.

## What is MeadowMat?

MeadowMat is a convenient, quick and easy way to establish a wildflower area in your garden. Specially selected mixtures of native and wildlife friendly flowers and grasses pre grown on a proven matting system. All you have to do is unroll the mat on to prepared ground and keep it well watered until it roots into your soil. It's like a garden on a roll!

This brochure covers the basics of creating and managing a wildflower meadow. All of the varieties of wildflower matting, low fertility soil and seed mentioned are available to buy from the MeadowMat website.

## Why Choose MeadowMat

- Pre grown mats give you instant ground cover
- Matting system means that annual weeds are suppressed
- Fast establishment – MeadowMat often flowers in its first summer
- Mixed perennial and biennial plants that keep flowering year after year
- Plant species chosen to provide food and habitat for bees, butterflies, small mammals, birds etc
- Low maintenance
- Delivered to your door for ultimate freshness
- Can be delivered within 3 working days
- MeadowMat plant species are hardy throughout the UK
- Low carbon footprint – our mats are grown in East Anglia

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# Where to start

What could be easier than a garden that comes on a roll? And it's true – using MeadowMat is no more complicated than laying turf, but there are some very important things to remember if you want to get the very best out of your beautiful wild flower meadow. First, however, you have three decisions to make.

## What sort of meadow do you want?

1. **Traditional MeadowMat** gives you an even mixture of grasses and flowers like the old fashioned hay meadow. All but one of the species in the mix are perennial, so they will return each year.
2. **MeadowMat for Birds and Bees** is a selection of meadow and hedgerow plants especially rich in nectar for summer insects and impressive seed heads for feeding the birds in the autumn and winter. Most of the species are perennial but a few are biennial and will not flower until their second year.
3. **MeadowMat for Woodland Shade** brings you the subtle hues of woodland wildflowers into the shadier parts of your garden. We've blended shade tolerant wildflowers with woodland grasses to create this versatile type of MeadowMat.
4. **MeadowMat for Cottage Gardens** gives you a glorious blend of native and non-native plants and grasses to attract and support pollinating insects whilst bringing a beautiful splash of colour to your garden. A mixture of perennial and biannual plants evocative of the look and feel of a traditional cottage garden.
5. **MeadowMat Roof & Garden** Create an instant wildflower roof or ground cover with 23 different species of UK native plants pre grown onto a matting system.

The guidelines for creating your meadow are the same for all varieties. There is little difference in the work and time you will spend looking after them too, so the choice is yours! If you haven't decided yet, refer to pages 4-8 to examine our varieties in more detail.

## Need to know more?

Visit the information centre on our website or call us for more details:

[www.meadowmat.com](http://www.meadowmat.com)

- How to lay MeadowMat
- Compare the different types of wildflower MeadowMat
- Prices and quotations
- Attracting garden wildlife
- Wildflower species
- Planting for pollinators
- Wildflower meadows as an educational resource
- Meeting sustainable targets for local authorities
- Using wildflowers in the community
- MeadowMat and BREEAM



## Laying turf or sowing seed?

MeadowMat was invented not just to make it easier and faster to create a new meadow but also to overcome the traditional problems that come with sowing seed. However, if you prefer to sow your meadow we can supply our seed mixtures as an alternative to laying rolls of established MeadowMat.

**From seed:** There is something truly satisfying about growing your own wildflowers from seed. Its relatively inexpensive to do but demands patience and care as wild flowers germinate slowly, and once they do, need to be protected. You will also be required to weed out some plants to maintain the balance of species. For more information about sowing MeadowMat from seed see page 11.

**Wild flower matting:** using an established 'meadow on a roll' doesn't just make it easier and faster to create your meadow; it also removes the worry about the species balance. As you will see below, it is simple to use and depending on the time of year you may even have flowers within just a few weeks!

A further consideration is the time of year. When sowing, it's best to do this in the autumn as some of your seeds will need the winter chill in order to 'wake up' and prepare for germination. When using matting, any time of year is suitable, weather permitting (autumn and spring often provide good rainfall; avoid frozen ground; and, if it is very dry, be sure you have a good hosepipe ready!)



## Where are you locating your meadow?

There are two things to consider:

**Sunshine:** wild flowers like sunshine. You need to choose an open and sunny spot for your meadow or you may find you have lots of green growth but very few flowers.

**Access:** once your meadow is in full flower you probably won't want to walk across it! So make sure that your location doesn't block off any important access within your garden.

Most people choose to convert an existing grassy area into a meadow. The guidelines below include the importance of removing the fertile top soil to create ideal meadow conditions. If you decide instead to remove paving or concrete, the same rules will apply *and* you may need to do additional work to prepare the soil (removing large stones, etc.)







# Types of Wildflower MeadowMat





The guidelines for creating your meadow are much the same for all our MeadowMat varieties. There is little difference in the work and time you will spend looking after them too, so the choice is yours! If you haven't decided yet, the following pages examine the differences in more detail.

## 1 Traditional MeadowMat

**Recreate the wildflower meadows of yesteryear in your own garden using Traditional MeadowMat.** This colourful mix gives a nice balance of colours and textures. In summer time, the tall plants will gently sway in the breeze bringing movement into the garden.

Allow plants to grow and flower unchecked throughout spring and summer and then cut back when flowering finishes – usually around August. Mow periodically in Autumn and Winter to keep it neat. Never cut to below the minimum length of 10cm (4 inches).

A mixture of 34 perennial plants, all of them native to the UK that emulates a traditional, old-fashioned hay meadow. Traditional MeadowMat likes to be in a sunny spot.

-  Sown mix contains 70% flowering plants, 30% grasses by weight.
-  4 species of native grasses to provide perches for insects and lava food for butterflies and moths.
-  30 species of flowering plants provide a rich source of pollen and nectar for a wide range of insects.
-  For best results, install on to low fertility soil.

**TIP** If desired you can mow pathways through your MeadowMat. It is also perfect for use on banking.

- ### Seedmix
- Autumn hawkbit
  - Birdsfoot trefoil
  - Bladder campion
  - Betony
  - Catsear
  - Common knapweed
  - Common sorrel
  - Common St Johns wort
  - Common toadflax
  - Common vetch
  - Cowslip
  - Field scabious
  - Hay Rattle
  - Lady's bedstraw
  - Meadow buttercup
  - Meadow cranesbill
  - Meadowsweet
  - Musk mallow
  - Oxeye daisy
  - Red campion
  - Red clover
  - Ribwort plantain
  - Salad burnet
  - Selfheal
  - Tufted vetch
  - Vipers bugloss
  - Wild carrot
  - Wild marjoram
  - White campion
  - Yarrow
  - Sheeps fescue
  - Slender creeping red fescue
  - Crested dogstail
  - Small leaved timothy





## 2 MeadowMat for Birds and Bees





**Keep the interest going all year round with Spring and Summer flowers and beautiful seedheads in the colder months of the year.**

MeadowMat for birds and bees includes nectar-rich flowering plants with architectural seedheads that will feed the birds in winter.

MeadowMat for Birds and Bees likes to be in a sunny spot.

Once it's established, MeadowMat for Birds and Bees is easy to manage. Simply allow the plants to grow, flower and set seed however they want to. Cut back the spent seedheads in late Winter, making sure that you remove all cuttings. Never cut to below the minimum length of 10cm (4 inches).

A mixture of 40 perennial and biannual plants, all of them native to the UK that benefit a wide range of wildlife. MeadowMat for Birds and Bees likes to be in a sunny spot.

-  Sown mix contains 80% flowering plants, 20% grasses by weight.
-  4 species of beautiful native grasses to provide perches for insects and seeds for birds.
-  36 species of flowering plants provide a rich source of pollen and nectar for all sorts of beneficial insects including bees, butterflies and moths.
-  For best results, install on to low fertility soil.

**TIP**

MeadowMat for Birds and Bees likes to be in a sunny garden spot.

## Seedmix

Yarrow  
Common Knapweed  
Common toadflax  
Wild carrot  
Agrimony  
Meadow cranesbill  
Fox and cubs  
Small scabious  
Sheeps bit scabious  
Common mallow  
Autumn hawkbit  
Tansy  
Birdsfoot trefoil  
Musk mallow  
Wild marjoram  
Teasel  
Vipers bugloss  
White clover  
Wild basil  
Meadow buttercup  
Wild clary  
Common sorrel  
Wild thyme  
Red campion  
White campion  
Ragged robin  
Common daisy  
Red clover  
Maiden pink  
Fennel  
Columbine  
Clustered bellflower  
Purple loostrife  
Cornflower  
Harebell  
Sweet violet  
Chicory  
Sheeps fescue  
Slender creeping red fescue  
Quaking grass  
Meadow barley





### 3 MeadowMat for Woodland Shade

**Bring the subtle hues of woodland wildflowers into the shadier parts of your garden.**


We've blended 35 species of shade tolerant wildflowers with 3 species of woodland grasses to create this versatile type of MeadowMat. Included in the seedmix are early flowering violets, colourful campions, sweetly scented ladies' bedstraw and cheery oxeye daisies.

MeadowMat for Woodland Shade will not tolerate really deep shade but it will thrive in the dappled shade of an orchard or shrubbery.

The upkeep for MeadowMat for Woodland Shade is the same as for Traditional MeadowMat – one main cut at the end of the flowering season with gentle mowing in Autumn and Winter if needed

 Sown mix contains 70% flowering plants, 30% grasses by weight.

 3 species of beautiful native grasses to cover the soil and provide perches for insects.

 35 species of flowering plants provide a splash of colour from late spring until early autumn. All species grow naturally in UK woodlands, hedgerows and meadows.

 Meadowmat for Woodland Shade will tolerate bright sunlight but its blend of plants prefers to live in the cool shade beneath trees.

**TIP** Meadowmat for Woodland Shade won't do well in really deep, permanent shade. These plants do need to see a little bit of daylight.

## Seedmix

Autumn hawkbit  
Betony  
Birdsfoot trefoil  
Cats' ear  
Common knapweed  
Common toadflax  
Common sorrel  
Common vetch  
Cowslip  
Dame's violet  
Field scabious  
Kidney vetch  
Lady's bedstraw  
Meadow cranesbill  
Meadow vetchling  
Meadow buttercup  
Meadowsweet  
Musk Mallow  
Oxeye daisy  
Pepper saxifrage  
Primrose  
Ragged robin  
Red campion  
Ribwort plantain  
Rough hawkbit  
Salad burnet  
Sanfoin  
Selfheal  
Tufted vetch  
White campion  
Wild carrot  
Wild marjoram  
Wild mignonette  
Wood sage  
Yellow rattle  
Sheeps fescue  
Crested dogstail  
Yellow oatgrass





## 4 MeadowMat for Cottage Gardens


**A glorious blend of native and non-native plants and grasses to attract and support pollinating insects whilst bringing a beautiful splash of colour to your garden.**

A mixture of 28 perennial and biannual plants evocative of the look and feel of a traditional cottage garden.

In common with other MeadowMat mixes, cottage garden is incredibly easy to maintain. The MeadowMat system stifles any annual weed seeds in the soil, so provided all perennial weeds are removed when you prepare the ground, this should reduce the need for weeding. You can deadhead if you want to- equally, you could allow seeds to develop and fall to the ground, enriching the mix for next year. In mid-late autumn, once the flowers are over, cut all the vegetation down to about 4" long, allow the cuttings to dry and drop their seeds and then remove them.

 Sown mix contains 80% flowering plants, 20% grasses by weight.

 2 species of beautiful native grasses to cover the soil and provide perches for insects.

 26 species of flowering plants provide a splash of colour from late Spring until early Autumn. The majority of species are native to the UK but we have introduced a couple of colourful cottage garden favourites that are not normally found in the wild.

 MeadowMat for Cottage Gardens prefers to be planted in full sun.

**TIP**

Ideal for use in beds and borders to create a traditional cottage garden look.

## Seedmix

Achillea millefolium  
Achillea millefolium  
Aquilegia  
Autumn oxeye  
Bellflower  
Birdsfoot trefoil  
Common daisy  
Common mallow  
Cornflower  
Cultivated scabious  
Field scabious  
Knapweed  
Meadow saxifrage  
Purple toadflax  
Ragged robin  
Red campion  
Ribwort plantain  
Rose campion  
Sweet violet  
Thrift  
Tufted vetch  
Verbena boneriensis  
Vipers bugloss  
White campion  
Wild thyme  
Yellow horned poppy  
Common bent grass  
Tufted hair grass









## 5 MeadowMat Roof and Garden

**An innovative way to bring biodiversity to new heights. Meadowmat for Roof and Garden has 23 species of native plants pre grown onto a blanket system. All you need to do is unroll it onto your green roof buildup, irrigate and watch it develop.**

Meadowmat for Roof and Garden must be installed on to at least 100mm depth of green roof substrate and it will need irrigation during long periods of drought.

This product gives instant plant coverage. In other words your green roof (or your landscaping project) will be green from day one.

The species have been selected for their ability to adapt to the harsh conditions on a living green roof and for their appeal to wildlife. These are nectar rich plants that feed pollinating insects and provide valuable habitat for minibeasts. Meadowmat for Roof and Garden supports a whole ecosystem!

-  Sown mix contains 95% flowering plants, 5% grasses by weight.
-  1 native grass species (Sheepsbit) provides movement and ready-made bird seed for local wildlife.
-  22 species of native flowering plants are all robust enough to be able to grow in a roof garden environment.
-  Meadowmat for Roof and Garden is as happy on the roof as it is on the ground making it superb low maintenance groundcover.

**TIP** Unroll Meadowmat on to a suitable base, keep it well irrigated for the first few weeks, and watch those wildflowers grow.

## Seedmix

Birdsfoot trefoil  
Bladder campion  
Cheddar pink  
Clustered bellflower  
Common daisy  
Common poppy  
Cornflower  
Fox and cubs  
Harebell  
Lady's bedstraw  
Maiden pink  
Meadow saxifrage  
Ragged robin  
Sea campion  
Selfheal  
Sheep's bit  
Soapwort  
Thrift (sea pink)  
Viper's bugloss  
Water avens  
Wild Thyme  
Yarrow  
Yellow rattle





# Creating your meadow

**At last, you're ready to create your meadow –and *preparation* is everything! If you are laying matting, DON'T order it yet. Your MeadowMat is freshly cut and MUST be laid as soon as it arrives. So first you need to do all the necessary preparation.**

**Step 1: Marking out** Once you have chosen your location, use sticks or other aids to mark out the size and shape of your meadow. Remember to view this from all angles to imagine how it might look (and make one last check that there aren't any large overhanging trees to impede the sunlight).

**Step 2: Removing grass and vegetation** If your meadow is replacing an area of grass, you must remove this either with a spade or a turf-cutting machine. You need to remove 'slices' of turf, so make vertical cuts to a depth of 3-4 inches, creating square or rectangular shapes; then slice horizontally two or three inches below the surface just beyond these vertical cuts. Finally use a spade to carefully separate the turf from the ground, rolling it up as you go. These rolls of unwanted turf can be left to rot down in a corner of the garden for compost. If your area has other plants – bushes, shrubs, weeds etc – these must be completely removed as well. NB: if you are worried that you may not have removed ALL the weeds and vegetation, you can apply a systemic weed-killer such as glyphosate and leave the area for at least three weeks before digging over the soil.

**Step 3: Assessing your soil** Wild flowers need soil which is poor in nutrients, and this also helps to keep the grasses under control. Most cultivated areas in your garden will be too rich and you will have to remove the top soil. If you're not sure, can you answer 'yes' to any of these:

- Has the area has been used for gardening or farming?
- Do stinging nettles and docks flourish there?
- Is the soil nice and crumbly when moist?
- Is the soil a good dark colour?

'Yes' to any of these indicates a rich, fertile soil which will need to be removed. But to be absolutely safe, remove the top soil anyway.

**MeadowMat is freshly cut and must be laid as soon as it arrives, so prepare your site before ordering.**

## The tools you will need

You don't need any special tools to create your meadow. A garden fork and spade, some watering equipment and maybe a few planks of wood (so that you don't walk on the area when you are laying matting or sowing seed) are enough for the job.

If you have a large area you might decide to hire a turf-cutting machine and you might also want to use a rotovator instead of digging over the soil.



**Step 4: Removing fertile soil** Remove the top soil to a depth of at least 10cm, being careful not to disrupt any cabling or pipework in the ground. Don't worry about the ground level dropping as the meadow will never be cut lower than about 4 inches, so you won't notice the difference. The soil you remove can be useful in other parts of the garden – in the vegetable garden, topping up tubs and planters, scattering around trees and shrubs, or giving away to grateful neighbours.

**Step 5: Adding low-fertility top soil (optional)** Step 4 above should be sufficient to reduce the fertility of the soil, but if you are not able to remove all of the good soil, you can replace what you did remove with low-fertility soil, ideal for wild flowers. We sell low-fertility soil because it can be very hard to find (after all, most gardeners want the opposite!). While it adds to the overall cost, it buys you peace of mind and adds to the performance of your meadow matting.

Alternatively, as it is the grasses that will take over on fertile soil, you can lay the Birds and Bees variety which contains only 20% grasses; or you can lay the traditional matting, mow it short for the first year and remove all of the clippings – this will gradually reduce the soil's fertility but of course you will miss out on any flowers while doing this.

Don't panic! You might think that sorting out the soil is just too much of a challenge, but it isn't. We simply offer all these tips because not reducing the soil's fertility is the most common reason for a potentially wonderful meadow going wrong. So it is well worth the effort!

Not reducing the soil's fertility is the most common reason for a potentially wonderful meadow going wrong.

**Step 6: Preparing the new surface** For both matting and seeds you need to rotovate or dig over the site to create a 15 cm layer of fine tilth (just as you would for a normal seed bed). But remember NOT to add any compost or fertiliser! Then rake the surface to make it level. Resist the instinct to water the ground. The drier it is, the more accurately you can check that the first watering goes right through to the soil (see step 9).

**Step 7: Order** Your MeadowMat normally takes three working days for delivery, and must be laid as soon as you receive it. So it's vital that you plan carefully and don't order until you know you're ready. Remember to measure the area carefully, including any odd-shaped corners. If your meadow includes both straight and round edges, you will need to break the total area down into sections, calculate the area of each and then add them up. Always add an extra 5% to your total area for trimmings and wastage.

**Step 8: Laying your matting** When laying MeadowMat you follow exactly the same method as for laying grass turf. However, MeadowMat rolls are heavy so it might take two people to carry them. You must avoid walking on fresh matting, so always try to work backwards, and if you do have to walk across newly-laid matting, try to use a wooden plank to spread the load.

Unroll a piece of matting roughly in position, then gently manoeuvre it into place. Do the same with the next piece, butting it up against the first, and so on. If you have oddly shaped corners, leave these to the end, cutting them from your leftovers.

**Step 9: Watering newly-laid matting** It is really important to keep your new matting moist, right down to the soil below. And because you shouldn't walk on it, you may need a good sprinkler or hose pipe to reach the entire area. As soon as the matting is laid give it a very good watering; gently lift a corner to check that the water has drained through to the soil. You must keep it well-watered for a good three weeks, maybe more, until the matting has 'bonded' to the soil.







# Sowing meadow from seed

MeadowMat is also available as a range of wildflower seed mixes. There are four seed mixes to choose from - each corresponds to one of the MeadowMat wild flower turf varieties with the exception of Roof and Garden.

All of the seeds have native provenance and have been sourced in the UK.

One 20g packet covers approximately 4 square metres of soil. (of course this will go much further than this if you're overseeding or repairing any bare patches of existing MeadowMat). Alternatively, choose a different blend to your original mix and introduce new flowers.

These little boxes are attractive enough for you to give as a gift. Ideal for birthday presents, childrens' party bags or even wedding favours.

Growing wildflowers from seed is always satisfying but requires patience! Wild flowers can be much slower to germinate than cultivated flowers, and once they do you will need to keep a close eye on what is actually growing and weed out a few plants to establish the ideal balance of species. You also need to protect the seeds and young seedlings from birds and cats.

If you are using seed rather than matting, you will have prepared the site and the soil in exactly the same way as for matting. Now carefully spread the seed at a rate of 3-4 grams per square metre. Don't cover the seeds with soil but water the ground, being careful not to wash away the seeds. For best results keep the ground moist until they have germinated and the seedlings are established.





# Maintaining your wildflower meadow

**Congratulations! You have created your own wonderful wild flower meadow! Now you just follow the simple guidelines for meadow maintenance and your meadow will give years of pleasure.**

Before farming was industrialised, meadows were the dining rooms for the farm's livestock. From late Summer to early Spring, the animals were left to graze in the meadows before being brought indoors to give birth and suckle their young. During this brief springtime respite the grasses were able to do some serious growing, ready to be cut in late Summer and stored as nutritious Winter hay.

Today, maintenance is pretty much the same, amounting to little more than the annual cut; and of course if you have a goat or a donkey to graze your meadow you won't even need that! However, to keep your meadow at its happiest, there are a few simple guidelines to follow, especially as you, unlike the farmers of yesteryear, will want to help the flowers thrive and not be overrun by grasses. Your MeadowMat will thrive if you follow these Five Golden Rules...

**1. Reduce soil fertility** For once you don't have to worry about your soil being in poor condition! Most of our beautiful native wild flowers are happiest when growing on poor soil. With too much nutrient, the grasses will thrive but only the strongest species of flower will be able to compete. Any soil maintenance you do will be to stop it from becoming too fertile, mostly by removing all clippings, dead vegetation and fallen leaves from nearby trees.

**2. Suppress the grasses** Even with poor soil the grasses tend to be the most competitive members of your meadow. Unlike the farmer, however, you want to keep these under control so that your flowers can thrive too. MeadowMat includes grass-suppressing plants like Yellow Rattle, but you can also use carefully timed mowing to help maintain the ideal balance of plants in your meadow.

**3. Maintain ideal flower conditions** As well as reducing soil fertility, you need to create the best all-round environment for your wild flowers. This includes maintaining suitable light or shade and moisture levels, as well as mowing correctly to allow the wild flowers to set their seeds ready for the next growing season.

**4. Discourage unwanted species** Weeds are the eternal chancers! Create some new growing space and they'll sniff it out and try to take over; and it's no different with a meadow. If you use ready-germinated MeadowMat you prevent this happening, but if you start with seed you will need to be vigilant. And over time, of course, seeds from unwanted plants will be delivered by birds and by the wind, but if your meadow is in good condition they won't pose any serious threat.

**5. Encourage a good range of species** Although both our MeadowMat roll and our wild flower seeds are carefully designed to provide a rich balance of plants, you may want to add some of your own too. You can sow seed or add plants or bulbs, and the seasonal guide on pages 13-14 will advise when it's best to do this.

## Cutting

It is important to remember to remove the clippings when you cut your meadow. This ensures that they don't fertilise the soil and make it too rich.

**Tools:** For a small meadow you can simply use a strong pair of garden shears, for a medium meadow you can use a sharp scythe. For larger areas, however, you might want to use special equipment. If you use a domestic lawn mower it must be able to cut at least 10cm from the ground. Alternatively, as we do at Harrowden Turf, you can use a machine like the Grillo mower with a collection box.

DO NOT use a strimmer as this will scatter tiny pieces of plant over the area which will break down and add unwanted nutrients to the soil.

**When to cut:** Our seasonal guide will help you decide in which month to give your meadow a cut. Whenever you do, choose a dry sunny day and ideally when the forecast predicts a few more dry days ahead. This will help the cuttings to dry faster before you remove them.

**How to cut:** Make sure the blade(s) on your shears, scythe or mower are sharp. Cut the grasses and flower stalks about 10cm above the ground. Leave the cuttings lying on top of the meadow for a couple of days to dry out (this makes them easier to remove and allows time for the seeds to drop). You can turn and shake the clippings after a day to help any ripe seeds fall onto the meadow ready to germinate.

Finally, when the cuttings are dry, give them one last shake and then remove them. It makes great hay for small pets but be sure there are no toxic plants in your mix.

**After cutting and removing:** Depending on the weather your meadow may look sad and bedraggled for a while, but don't worry! As soon as the rain comes the plants will soon recover and green up again. Whatever you do, DON'T be tempted to add fertiliser to help it along.



# Spring

**Your established meadow doesn't need much attention in Spring.**

**Mowing:** If you feel that your Traditional MeadowMat meadow was too grassy last season or that soil fertility is too high (look out for too much grass and signs that some of the flowers are struggling to compete) then you can mow your meadow in early-to-mid March (see *'How to cut your meadow'*). This is in addition to the regular autumn cut. If you have the Birds and Bees MeadowMat, you should already have cut in late-winter.

Remember to remove the clippings to prevent unwanted soil fertility and to allow sunlight to reach the smaller seedlings. At this time of year the clippings will be short so you don't need to leave them to dry before removing; just use a rake to gently tease them away, being careful not to disturb any young seedlings.

**Growing:** Allow your meadow to grow freely from March/April, and DON'T add fertiliser or feed of any kind whatsoever.

**Sowing:** If you want to add some extra seed to your meadow, Spring is a good time for sowing annuals like bright blue cornflowers, sunny yellow corn marigolds and bright white corn chamomile. First rake over the area you plan to overseed, removing any debris and scuffing up the surface of the soil a little. Then sprinkle the seeds sparingly onto the bare soil and press them in lightly.

“Spring is nature’s way of saying... Let’s party!”

Robin Williams



# Summer

**The summer months of June and July see your meadow looking its very best! You can admire the beautiful flowers and the delicate butterflies while being serenaded by the industrious buzzing bees! Meanwhile there is not much work to do – except preparing for the annual cut.**

**Mowing:** The big annual mow for Traditional MeadowMat is really an Autumn job, but sometimes your meadow is ready by late Summer - you will know the time has come when you see the grasses turning a honey colour and the flowers turning into seed heads.

You can also mow early if you feel you have too many grasses in your plant mix. Cutting grasses early, while still lush and green, has a much stronger impact although you may have to sacrifice a few late flowers this time round. However, if you have the Birds and Bees MeadowMat, you must delay your annual cut until late Winter; the plants have been carefully selected to give you (and the birds) some beautiful seed heads throughout the Autumn and into the Winter.

**Growing:** Leave your meadow to grow during May and June and you will be rewarded with a plethora of gorgeous flowers. And don't be tempted to feed them! They'll do fine as they are and won't thank you for enriching the soil. If you spot unwanted plants like nettles or dock, simply pull them out.

If you have a large area you might want to bring out the mower early to cut a path through the meadow. This lets you get up closer to the flowers and the wildlife without crushing them. You can cut your path as low as 5cm but as always remove the clippings! Foraging birds like the blackbird will value the shorter grass, as will low-growing flowers (and their visitors) such as nectar-rich clover, birdsfoot trefoil and common daisy.

**Sowing:** Wild flower seeds are unlikely to germinate at this time of year, so sowing is not a good idea. You can however lay new MeadowMat turf to fill in or create new areas.

“The hum of bees is the voice of the garden.”

Elizabeth Lawrence





# Autumn

If you have the Birds and Bees MeadowMat – the Autumn is simply the time to enjoy watching the wildlife visit the wonderful seed heads; you can also do some amazing photography when the first frosts appear!

But if you have the Traditional MeadowMat, autumn is an important house-keeping time, preparing for the following year. In days gone by this is when the cattle would have been grazing on the golden grass. Assuming you don't have cattle, the biggest job is the mowing (if you haven't already done this), along with managing the species of plants in your meadow and preventing the soil from becoming too fertile.

**Mowing:** This is the main cutting time for Traditional MeadowMat (but remember to leave the Birds and Bees variety until late Winter). Exactly when you do it will depend on our increasingly changeable weather, but once your seed heads are well established, you can mow your meadow. Aim for a cutting height of no less than 10cm and remember to remove the cuttings once dry (see 'How to cut your meadow'). You may find you need to do a second cut later in the Autumn if the grasses grow back too vigorously.

You also need to be vigilant and remove falling leaves from nearby trees and bushes before they begin breaking down and feeding the soil. If you have a grass box on your mower, you can gather them this way and deposit the finely-cut leaves in your compost.

**Growing:** Once you have cut your meadow, just leave it to begin growing back. DON'T feed it!

**Sowing:** Autumn is the best time of year to lay new turf as it can then establish during the Winter. You can also sow seeds; some varieties will germinate within a few weeks while others (like yellow rattle, very useful for suppressing over-enthusiastic grasses) need to rest in the soil until the frosts awaken them and give you springtime seedlings. See 'Spring' for advice on how to sow. You can also carefully add adult plants and set bulbs now to overwinter in the soil.

“Autumn is the hush before winter”

French proverb



# Winter

**During winter your meadow simply looks after itself, leaving you with little or nothing to do.**

**Mowing:** For Traditional MeadowMat you will already have cut your meadow in the Autumn. However, if the Winter is mild and the grasses keep growing you can mow again; just remember to keep a height of 10-15 cm and don't scalp the plants – and always remove the cuttings before they feed the soil!

For Birds and Bees MeadowMat, late winter (February-March) is the time for your big mow. Your aim is to clear whatever is dead and decaying and leave room for the emerging plants and new seedlings to enjoy the sunshine. Cut back your meadow to 10cm, and remove the clippings and any dead vegetation.

**Growing:** You won't see much growth during the Winter; some plants may even disappear altogether! Don't worry – there's plenty going on underground as the roots and then shoots get ready for their Spring burst.

**Sowing:** Winter is not a good time to sow seeds but you can lay new MeadowMat as long as the ground isn't frozen.

“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant”

Anne Bradstreet







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