

Creating a wildflower lawn or meadow

At Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) we're passionate about creating and restoring precious upland hay meadows. These extraordinary habitats can support up to 120 species of wildflowers and other plants in one field, and many insects, mammals and birds.

Upland hay meadows are home to a unique group of wildflowers and grasses that are adapted for a northern upland climate. Unfortunately these meadows are now one of the most threatened habitats in Europe.

Support local wildlife. Grow your own wildflower lawn

You can help wildflowers and wildlife in your own back garden by creating a wildflower lawn or meadow. Your wildflower area will bring wildlife into your garden and provide colours, scents and sounds for you to enjoy throughout summer.

Wildflowers support a wide range of pollinating insects such as hoverflies and bumblebees which, together with seed heads, provide food for birds, voles, shrews, hedgehogs and other small mammals.



Planning your meadow

Things to consider before creating your meadow.

- Choose a quiet space away from areas of high use to ensure plants don't get trampled or damaged.
- Pick a sunny spot for your meadow. Most meadow species don't do well in the shade.
- The size and shape of the meadow is not important, it can be simply a square metre left un-mown. For larger areas you may want to mow a path through it to make access easier.
- Choose an area with poor to moderately fertile soil with a fine structure and few weeds or vigorous grasses. Most meadow plants need soil pH of between 5.5 and 6.5 - check yours with a test kit from a garden centre. Add ground limestone to raise the pH (to 5.5 or above) or ferrous sulphate to lower the pH (to 6.5 or lower).
- Where possible buy local provenance seeds or plug plants as they will work in synchronisation with the wildlife they support. You can buy small packets of northern provenance wildflower seed from the YDMT online shop www.ydmt.org/shop. Each packet contains 3 grams of meadow seed, enough for two square metres. Alternatively you can buy British or regionally sourced meadow seed and plug plants from a seed company.

Turn over to find out how to manage your meadow and help your wildflowers flourish.

Making your meadow

Yorkshire Dales meadow plants

Common hay meadow plants

- Meadow buttercup
- Ribwort plantain
- Common sorrel
- Selfheal
- Pignut
- Red clover

Less common hay meadow plants

- Rough hawkbit
- Meadow vetchling
- Common knapweed
- Ox-eye daisy
- Meadowsweet
- Marsh marigold
- Common bistort
- Devil's-bit scabious
- Eyebright
- Yellow rattle
- Bird's-foot trefoil
- Betony

Special plants of upland hay meadows

- Globeflower
- Water avens
- Great burnet
- Lady's mantle
- Wood crane's-bill
- Melancholy thistle

Hay meadow grasses

- Sweet vernal grass
- Yellow oat grass
- Quaking grass
- Red fescue
- Common bent
- Crested dog's-tail



A step by step guide to creating your meadow area

1. Decide in early spring where your meadow will be located and mark it out.
2. Let the vegetation grow during spring and summer to see what plants come up naturally.
3. In late August/ September mow the area hard and rake off all the vegetation (which can be composted).
4. Rake the ground to create areas of bare soil.
5. Sow the seed at a rate of 1.5 grams per square metre. A flour shaker can be used to do this. For areas bigger than a few square metres you can mix the seed with sand, this helps to spread the seed evenly and you can see where seed has already been sown.

Top Tip Add Yellow rattle to produce a better display of flowers and ease the mowing required. It's semi-parasitic properties help to suppress the growth of vigorous grasses. Add it as seed in the autumn as it needs a period of prolonged cold to germinate.

6. Don't rake the seed into the soil - it needs to lie on the surface.
7. Now it's time to trample! Get family, friends or children to pretend to be sheep or cattle walking over the meadow! This will press the seed firmly onto the soil.
8. Water the area regularly during dry weather.


Meadow
links 

Creating wildflower superhighways across the Yorkshire Dales.

Managing your meadow

- Mow the meadow regularly to a height of 2-4cm from September until the grass stops growing, otherwise the seedlings will be shaded out.
 - Start mowing again in early spring, stopping in mid-April to allow the wildflowers to grow. Bear in mind that many species take a couple of years before they flower.
 - The meadow can be mown any time between mid-July and mid-September. Mow the meadow to a height of 5cm. Leave the cuttings for a day or two to allow any wildflower seeds to be shed and then rake the cuttings off and compost them. By mowing later in the season you'll be giving late-flowering plants the chance to set seed - and providing pollinators with an extended supply of nectar and pollen rich plants.
 - In the second and subsequent years, mow whenever the vegetation grows to 10-15cm tall but don't cut it shorter than 5cm. Stop mowing between mid-April and mid-July (or September). Always rake the cuttings off, but after the summer cut leave the clippings for a day or two before raking them off. Never add fertiliser, this will only help the grasses to out-compete the wildflowers.
 - After a few years, once the wildflowers are fairly established, following the summer cut you could try leaving part of the meadow uncut until early spring, so that birds can feed on the seed heads and insects can hibernate in the long grass.
- Good luck! We hope you and the wildlife enjoy your meadow area for many years to come...**

Save our meadows

Here are a few great things you can do to support YDMT's work to protect precious species-rich hay meadows in the Yorkshire Dales.

Living Bouquet

Give a Living Bouquet gift & help create an area of traditional hay meadow habitat, full of native wildflowers and home to bumblebees, birds and butterflies. www.ydmt.org/livingbouquet

Wildflower gifts

Buy something from our range of beautiful wildflower inspired gifts - from wildflower seed to jigsaws. www.ydmt.org/shop

Donate

Visit www.ydmt.org/donations every penny counts towards saving our precious meadows.

Meadow Links is delivered by the **Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust** in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Buglife's B-Lines project and Natural England. For more information please contact:

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