

Using Wildflower Seeds in the landscape is the most economical way to establish wildflowers in areas with adequate sunlight. With a little know-how, your planting can produce spectacular results. The following is a **step by step guide** for getting the best result from your wildflower or native grass seeds.

Step One: Choose a site that receives direct sun for six or more hours in the summer. (Use a shade-tolerant mix, like our Little Bit Shady Mix or shade-tolerant individual species, in areas with brief full-sun, filtered/dappled light, or "high shade" from tall trees.)

Step two: Preparing your site for seed. Wildflower seed must have direct contact with the soil - they cannot germinate on top of grass or other foliage. Wildflowers are excellent competitors if they get a good start. Having some exposed soil to press the seeds into (not bury) is part of that start. Getting rid of what is there is CRITICAL. Summer is a good time to prepare a site for fall or winter planting. For faster project start up, we recommend using a glyphosate-type herbicide (like RoundUp®), especially if planting in areas of bermuda grass, tall fescue, Johnsongrass or clover. Covering the area in black plastic during the hot summer is a non-chemical alternative that will kill many weeds. *If you do not use herbicides here is our recommendation: use an entire growing season, keep area cut back and scraped off, and then sow in the late fall.* Eradicating grass* and weeds is very important, so feel free to call to discuss your site prep with us. Black or clear plastic can be used with some success. But do consider this step important in the assessing the type of results you will have.

Expose the soil: If your site is not prepared by fall, winter (native flowers) and spring are still excellent times for putting seed out. Mow or burn dead vegetation down as low as possible and rake away. Exposing even small pockets of soil between clumps of existing vegetation is better than no prep at all. If possible, rough the ground a little. For very small areas, a garden rake may be adequate. For small to medium-sized plantings, a lawn dethatcher or rejuvenator, like a power rake (check your local equipment rental store) does a good job of scratching the soil surface without tilling. For large areas, use a harrow with tines down, smoothing with tines up. Deep-tilling can bring up competitive weed seeds, and small wildflower seeds might settle too deeply if the soil is fluffed-up too much. Larger areas, of a half-acre or more, may require scraping with a tractor and box blade. Wildflowers will grow in rocky soils as long as it is not thin soil over bed-rock. Construction sites with exposed clay subsoil may require some added topsoil or compost to add organic matter for water retention. **FOR BEST RESULTS APPLY 3-6 INCHES OF WEED-FREE COMPOST OVER YOUR PREPARED SOIL AND SOW SEED ON SURFACE.** This is the best way to get a good headstart for your wildflower seedlings.

Step Three: Sowing the seed with slightly moist sand as a carrier (about an 8:1 volume ratio of sand to seed; this is about a 5-gallon bucket half-full of sand to one pound of seed). You can also use sawdust or Milorganite®, or vermiculite. A carrier separates the seeds from each other and extends the mixture so you don't use up all the seed before you've covered the area. The carrier also allows you to see where you

have sown and where you have not sown seed. For large areas, you may want to split up the seeds in batches and sow blocks of comparable square footage to insure even coverage. A little seed goes a long way. Check out specific coverage recommendations for our various mixes on our seed list information, or visit our website, listed below. As a rough rule of thumb, one pound of seed will usually cover around 1,000-2,000 square feet. Sow a heavier rate if you want a solid show or if you expect high weed competition. Plan to keep the area mowed the season before seeding to cut down on unwanted weeds in the soil bank. Sow the seed, either by hand-broadcasting or with a spreader. Do not cover the seed with soil but press the seed lightly into the soil or cover the seed with ¼ inch layer of sand or vermiculite. Lightly mulching the area with straw or pine needles can greatly improve your success and is especially critical on sloped areas. Using an erosion mat with excelsior allows light through is a good solution.

Step Four: PATIENTLY wait for beautiful wildflowers. This is the hardest part, but patience is a virtue with wildflowers because the individual species won't germinate until conditions are right for them (and even then, not all seeds at once). Also, many native species, and most perennials do not bloom the first year from seed. Don't be too quick to judge your planting success, observe the seedlings carefully.

Sowing Native Grasses is similar to sowing wildflower seeds, but there are some differences. The following is a brief overview of the process. It is recommended to sow native grasses in warm seasons. These are warm season germinators so plan to see best results when sown on carefully prepared soil (see reverse) in May, June or July, other sowing times will not harm the seed. Remember: Any herbicide that would kill undesirables like Johnson grass, tall fescue or Bermuda grass, will also kill native grasses like Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Purple Top, Switchgrass, Indiangrass, Broomsedge, Virginia Wild Rye, etc etc any native grasses you may want. So you must get rid of unwanted grasses (Bermuda, tall fescue, Johnsongrass) BEFORE YOU SOW NATIVE GRASSES. Native grasses are long-lived and very tough but are slow to establish. We suggest carefully exterminating all unwanted grasses over an extended period of time, and then sow your native grass seed. A good effect is to sow native grasses adjacent to flower areas and enjoy them, as a border where the winter interest of the seed stalks is great for wildlife and beauty in the winter months also.

We suggest sowing seed of grasses and flowers in separate areas to begin with, This is so you can control unwanted grasses with *post-emergent grass specific herbicide in the flower areas for unwanted grasses* and not harm your native grasses planted in a different area. If you have grass competition from unwanted mentioned above in your flower patches, you can deal with it. You cannot if you have sown flower seed with native grass seed in the same areas because these chemicals will also kill native grasses.

**Killing grass in your wildflower patch:* tall fescue, Bermuda, and other persistent grasses can be controlled by using a grass-specific herbicide like Poast®, Vantage®, Ornamec®, or Hi-Yield Grasskiller® (check labels: some require you to add an oil-based adjuvant like Peptoil® in order to work properly).

Grass-specific herbicides will not harm the wildflowers. DO NOT USE ANY HERBICIDES ON NATIVE GRASSES. You are making a difference when you plant wildflowers. www.hollandwildflowerfarm.com

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