



## How to make a wild flower meadow

**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?

**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, and if you follow our maintenance advice you won't find the grasses taking over either!

**MeadowMat for Birds and Bees** gives you a 20% grass and 80% flower mixture. The selection of meadow and hedgerow plants are especially rich in nectar for summer insects and form 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.

**NEW for 2015 Cottage Garden MeadowMat** 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 28 perennial and biannual plants evocative of the look and feel of a traditional cottage garden.

**NEW for 2015 MeadowMat for Woodland Shade** brings you 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.

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 'Types of Wildflower MeadowMat' leaflet to examine the difference in more detail.

### We're here to help you

We're not just passionate about restoring Britain's essential wild flower meadows; we're dedicated to helping YOU to do it too. So we can provide advice on:

- Type of MeadowMat
- The best location
- Size and shape of meadow
- Installation
- Simple maintenance
- Trouble shooting

So, call us NOW and let's get planning! Alternatively, visit the website to learn more about the different types of MeadowMat and the easy installation and maintenance.

## 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:** growing flowers 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.

**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 well as the birds and cats). 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.)



# Creating your meadow

## PREPARATION (STEPS 1-6)

**At last, you're ready to begin making 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, especially to the soil.**

**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 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.

**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.

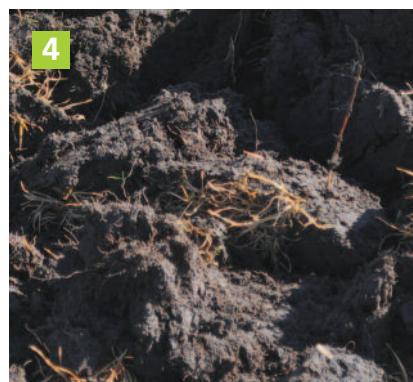
**Step 5: Adding low-fertility top soil (optional)** Step 4 above should be sufficient to reduce the fertility of the soil, but if you are not able to remove all of the good soil, you can replace what you did remove with low-fertility soil, ideal for wild flowers. We sell guaranteed low-fertility soil 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.

## 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.



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!

**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 10).



## INSTALLATION (STEPS 7-10)

**NOW you are ready to lay your MeadowMat wildflower matting!**

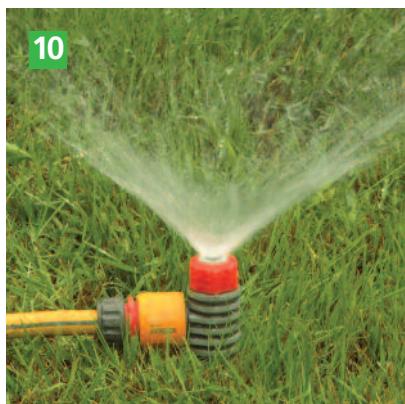
**Step 7: Order** Your MeadowMat normally takes three working days for delivery, must be laid as soon as you receive it. So it's vital that you plan carefully and don't order until you know you're ready. Remember to measure the area carefully, including any odd-shaped corners. If your meadow includes 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: Sowing seeds** 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.



**Step 10: 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.

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 both to you and to your garden visitors of all varieties.