

Biodiversity & wildflower meadows



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Nature

versus

Gardening!

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan has been a great success



How-to-guide

Creating wild pollinator nesting habitat

National Biodiversity Data Centre
Documenting Ireland's Wildlife



Pollinator-friendly HERBS

Our pollinating insects are in decline. One third of our 99 bee species are at risk of extinction. By choosing pollen-rich herbs for your garden, you will help provide much-needed food for our Bumblebees and other pollinating insects as well as creating a colourful garden that you can use. There are lots of pollinator-friendly herbs to choose from.

To learn more about the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, see www.pollinators.ie

National Biodiversity Data Centre



Culinary herbs

Communities

How can Local Communities help Pollinators?



Local communities can lead the way in creating an Ireland where pollinators can thrive. To find out how to make your community pollinator friendly, download our publication: [Local Communities: actions to help pollinators](#)

Suitable for: TIDYTOWNS, Keep Northern Ireland beautiful, local wildlife groups, historic graveyard groups, college campuses, etc.

Features of our Local Community Guidelines:

- Range of 24 low/no-cost pollinator-friendly actions provided to suit all local communities
- Pollinator-friendly planting lists
- Important advice for purchasing wildflower seed mixes for pollinators
- Information about our pollinators, why they are declining and what they need to survive

Pollinator friendly planting code

Experts agree that inadequate nutrition is a major cause of pollinator declines. We want pollinators to be there when we need them, but our landscape doesn't provide the abundance and diversity of flowering plants that they need to survive throughout their life cycle. To have a healthy balanced diet, bees need to be able to feed on pollen and nectar from a range of different flowers from early spring to autumn.

It is important to prioritise increasing native plants (trees, shrubs, wildflowers) across the landscape to provide food for pollinators.

Spring  Autumn



Willow



Dandelion



Clover



Knapweed



Bramble



Ivy



Bulbs, Annuals, Biennials, Perennials, Climbers & Shrubs

This list of ornamental plants is taken directly from the RHS Perfect for Pollinators list <https://www.rhs.org.uk>. Potentially invasive species have not been included. Highlighted species are those recognised to be particularly good for pollinators in Ireland, based on expert opinion (this is not exhaustive).

Autumn

BULBS

- Colchicum species** (Autumn crocus)
- Crocus species** (Crocus, autumn-flowering)

PERENNIALS

- Aconitum carmichaelii* (Carmichael's monk's hood)
- Actaea simplex* (Simple-stemmed bugbane)
- Anemone x hybrida* (Japanese anemone)
- Anemone hepatica* (Chinese anemone)
- Aster species and hybrids** (Michaelmas daisy)
- Campanula poscharskyana** (Trailing bellflower)
- Ceratostigma plumbaginoides* (Hardy blue-flowered leadwort)
- Chrysanthemum species & hybrids (Chrysanthemum)
- Dahlia species & hybrids** (Dahlia)
- Helianthus x laetiflorus* (Perennial sunflower)
- Leucanthemella serotina* (Autumn ox-eye)
- Salvia species** (Sage, autumn flowering)

CLIMBERS

- Clematis heracleifolia* (Tube clematis)
- Hedera colchica* (Persian ivy)

SHRUBS

- Arbutus unedo* (Strawberry tree)

Winter

BULBS

- Crocus species** (Crocus, winter-flowering)
- Eranthis hyemalis* (Winter aconite)
- Galanthus nivalis** (Common snowdrop)

PERENNIALS

- Helleborus species and hybrids** (Hellebore, winter flowering)

CLIMBERS

- Clematis cirrhosa* (Spanish traveller's joy)

SHRUBS

- x Fatshedera lizei* (Tree ivy)
- Lonicera x purpusii* (Purpus honeysuckle)
- Mahonia species** (Oregon grape)
- Salix aegyptiaca** (Musk willow)
- Sarcococca confusa* (Sweet box)
- Sarcococca hookeriana* (Sweet box)
- Viburnum tinus** (Laurustinus)

Spring

BULBS

- Crocus species** (Crocus, spring-flowering)
- Muscari armeniacum** (Armenian grape hyacinth)
- Ornithogalum umbellatum* (Common star of Bethlehem)

The creation of beautiful wildflower meadows was enthusiastically latched onto as a biodiversity action

- Seed packets, seed boxes, Bee bombs were suddenly available everywhere



Bees & Pollinators have provided a great focus but perhaps to the detriment of other wildlife?

- People often talk about 'saving the bees'
- The concept of pollinators as keystone species: Ecologists feel bees have been a great keystone upon which to base ecologically-sound biodiversity enhancing actions by the general public
- However, the alarm is being raised by some now as purportedly 'bee-friendly' actions are resulting in the loss of habitats already of biodiversity value.



Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals
Act Local – Think Global

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Tionscald Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

SuperValu TidyTowns
Caring for our environment
Administered by the Department
of Rural & Community Development

SuperValu TidyTowns Newsletter
Issue 2021-11
Christmas 2021
Welcome Message

Dublin Naturalist's Field Club - Wildflower Seeds

My name is Rosaleen Fitzgerald and I am writing to you on behalf of the Conservation sub-committee of the Dublin Naturalist's Field Club <https://dnfc.net/>

In recent times we have become concerned at the use of Wildflower Seed Mixes in public places in very many towns and villages all over the country.

Our concern is based on the fact that these seed mixes contain species that displace the native flora, often permanently.

The plant species that these mixes contain are often not of local or Irish origin and, while they may be colourful, they may offer little advantage by way of pollen or nectar to our native insects. In addition, they are not capable of sustaining themselves where they are planted because it is not their natural habitat.

Even where the seed mixes contain species of Irish origin, they can still have a negative impact, as the seed may have been gathered in a completely different part of the country. Sowing this seed will introduce plants that may have a different genotype to those growing naturally in your area.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre, the promoters of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, has now discouraged the use of wildflower seeds. Its advice may be found at <https://pollinators.ie> (See the Buzz and Wildflower Seed)

By simply changing the mowing regime, amazing wildflowers like Dandelion, Clovers, Self-heal, Cowslip and Bird's-foot-trefoil may naturally pop-up year after year at no cost. These common flowers will provide nutrients for our pollinator-insect needs. Remember that the majority of our native insects and other fauna are neither consumers of pollen nor nectar and so have their own criteria for beauty!

Similarly, if you have an area that has been disturbed or remodelled just leave it to colonise naturally. The initial pioneer species will soon be succeeded by a range of plants that are well adapted to your local conditions. You also would be helping biodiversity. You may have to slightly modify your concept of a weed! By reviving pockets of natural grassland meadows and verges, no matter how tiny, the collective benefit to wildlife would be enormous.

Our committee has produced a Position Paper on 'Wildflower Seed Mixtures', which is available on the DNFC website. I would urge you and your colleagues to inform yourselves on the subject of Wildflower Seed Mixes with a view to more sustainable preparations for TidyTowns competitions.

<https://dnfc.net/2021/07/14/wildflower-mixes/>

If you have any questions on what is contained in the paper our committee is more than happy to answer them and I can be contacted at rfitzaer53@outlook.com

These issues were highlighted in a position paper published by the Dublin Naturalists Field Club last year

DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB



The case against 'wildflower' seed mixtures

Position Paper No. 1 by The Dublin Naturalists' Field Club

Swathes of 'wildflowers' originating from commercial seed mixtures have become a common feature on roadsides and in other open spaces, amidst a growing perception that such areas benefit bees and other pollinating insects and counteract biodiversity loss. Plants that are deliberately sown are not, of course, 'wild' and the use of these commercial seed mixtures is harmful to the natural environment: it damages native habitats and is of no long-term value to pollinators or other wildlife. Instead, flora and fauna — including pollinators — are best served by recognising and conserving *in-situ* natural habitats and adopting low-intensity management methods.



Wildflower seed mixtures do not help address biodiversity loss. Rather, they cause further disruption to what remains of the natural environment.

The full position paper is available to download in pdf form at this web address:

<https://dnfc.net/2021/07/14/wildflower-mixes/>

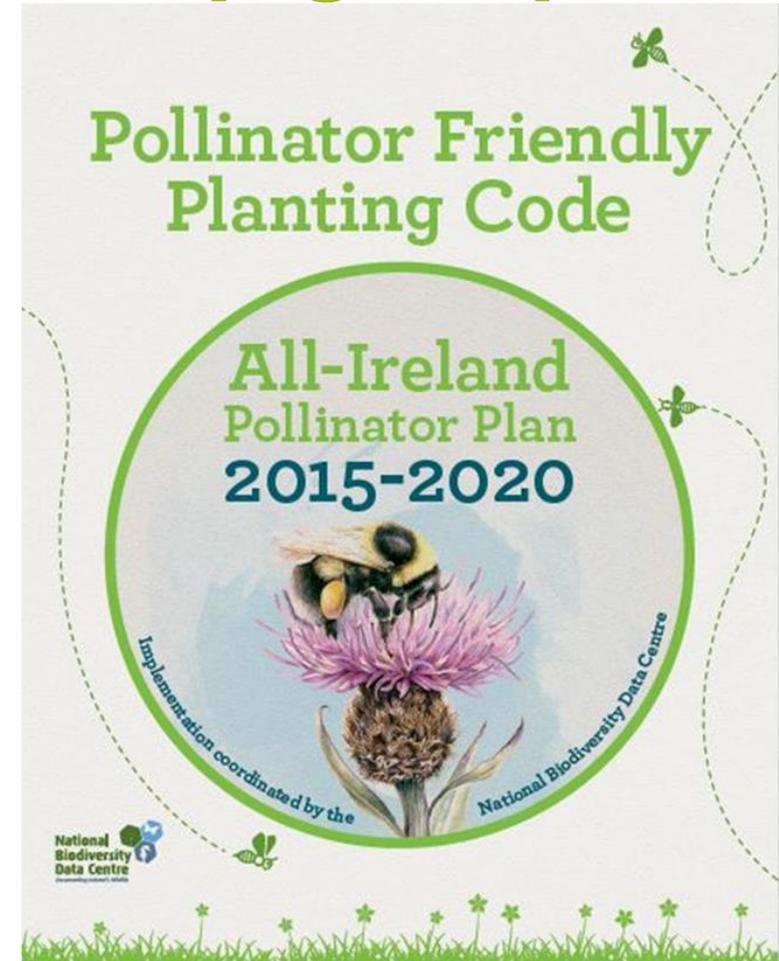
What is the problem with wildflower meadows?

It's complicated!

- **Non-native seed being portrayed as native:** Many of the seeds the commercial wildflower seed packets are not actually native Irish wildflower species. This runs the risk of introducing species that could become invasive
- Even if the species are native to the Irish Flora e.g. Ox eye daisies, if they are of foreign genotype then they could hybridise with our own native plants thereby **potentially changing the Irish genotype** resulting in our wild plants being weakened e.g. emerging too early and being killed off by the late Irish frosts.
- **Areas** that are already wild and **of biodiversity importance** locally **are being cleared** in order to create 'wildflower meadows'

The way forward for community groups:

- Wildflower seed meadows are very pretty but they can only be viewed as a gardening measure – not a biodiversity measure
- Their presence outside of an ornamental flowerbed should not be encouraged. If in wild areas then they are actually displacing valuable native habitat
- They are problematic for community groups as many species are annuals and therefore need re-seeding every year. Pollinator-friendly bulbs, shrub & herbaceous perennials are the way forward for sustainable communities in the formal & ornamental beds of their urban areas. See the Pollinator friendly Planting Code for lots of suggestions



<https://pollinators.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Planting-Code-2018-WEB.pdf>

**We all need to help increase awareness of what a true
biodiverse meadow and lawn looks like in Ireland!**



Quite grassy actually! And not all that colourful

All photos © Fiona Mac Gowan

There are actually many options open to community groups if they want to have their own biodiversity-rich wildflower meadows & it all begins with:

Don't mow let it grow!



All photos © Fiona Mac Gowan

For more formal areas, the short wildflower meadow is perfect. Grass is mowed every 4-6 weeks thus allowing dandelions, daisies, selfheal, clovers etc. to flower

Don't mow, let it grow!

Pollinator-friendly grass cutting

Reducing your grass cutting regime is the most cost-effective way to help bees - these actions do not involve purchasing wildflower seed



Short-flowering meadow: Cut parts or all of your grass less frequently to allow wildflowers to grow and provide food.

These flowers will naturally grow in slightly longer grass. The more of these flowers the better!

Dandelion



Dead nettles



Selfheal



Bird's-foot-trefoil



Clover

Short-flowering meadow: provides food for pollinators

Kept short for humans

Long-flowering meadow: provides food and shelter for pollinators

This image shows a mosaic of three different grass cutting regimes.

www.pollinators.ie



© Fiona Mac Gowan

MORE DANDELIONS = MORE WILD BEES!



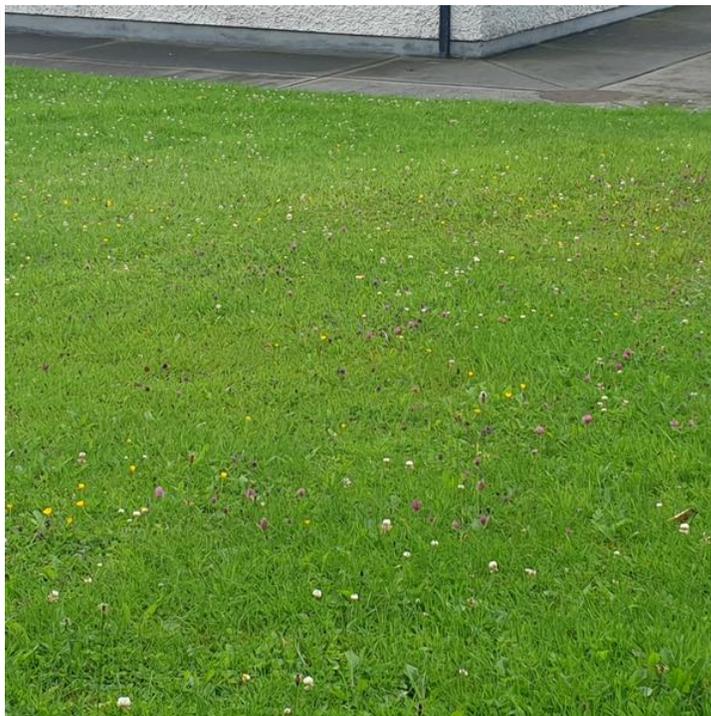
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You never know what will appear!



Short wildflower meadow & ornamental variations featuring bulbs (it's not recommended to plant bulbs in wild grassland habitats but they are great for prolonging interest in previously seeded lawn areas)



Arna Bhainistiú
don bhFiadhúlra
Managed for Wildlife

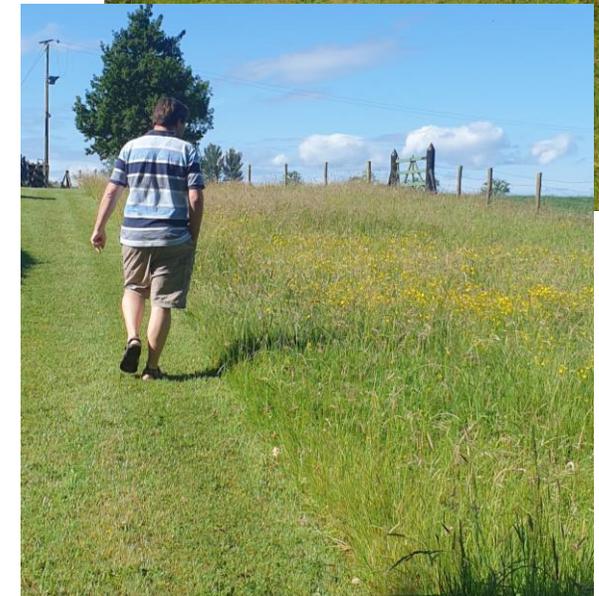
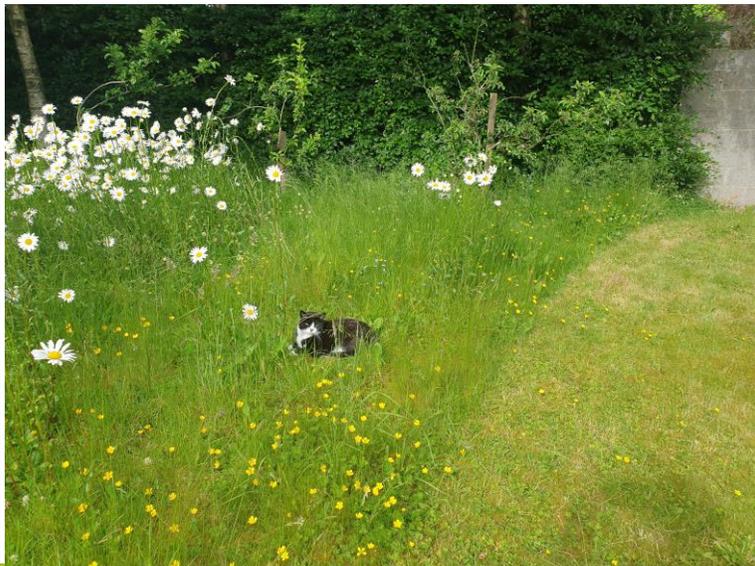
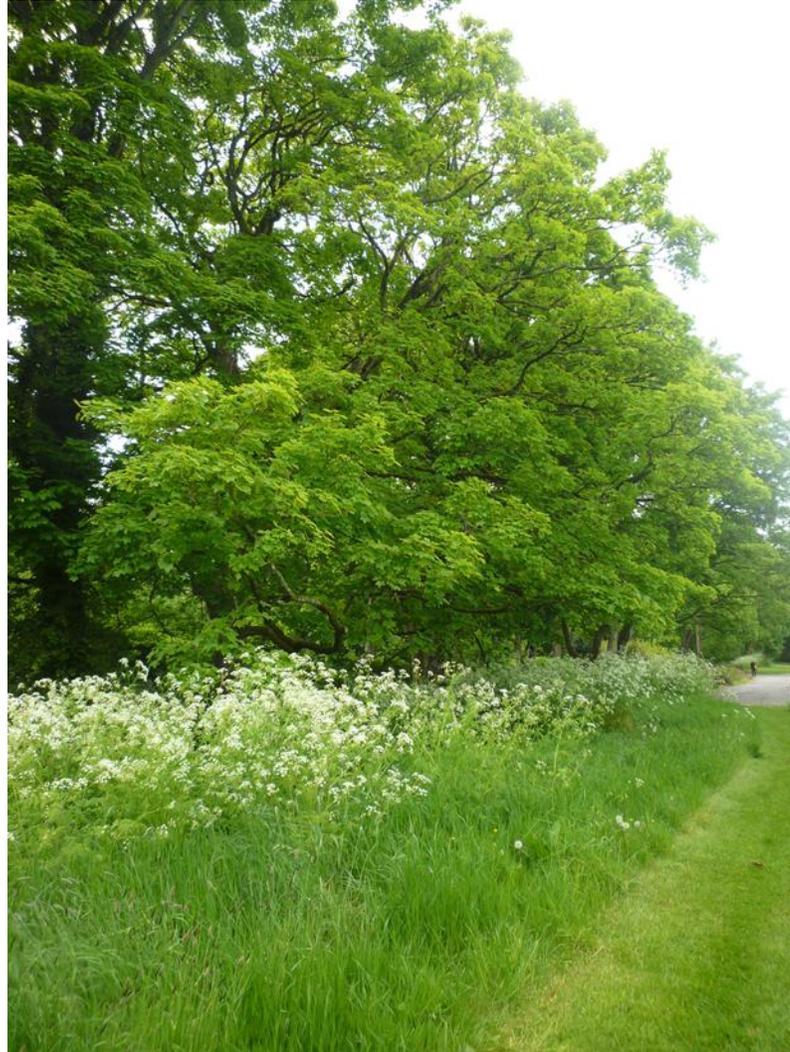
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1. First mowing in late April
2. Mow every 4-6 weeks thereafter
3. Lift & remove the cuttings

All photos © Fiona Mac Gowan

Grass verges as we've been recommending for several years: leaving long at the base of walls/hedges but having a neat mown edge by the road/path. Also mown paths through taller grass areas are inviting to the walker.



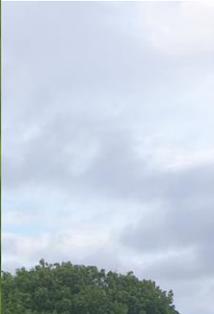
Tall wildflower meadows where the area is managed much like the old hay meadows & only mown once or twice in the year & its cuttings lifted



Patience is needed as this can take a few years to develop but in the long run it is the most rewarding in terms of maximum biodiversity



In the Irish wild meadow habitat, grasses & other plants are important too – it's not always about the wildflowers!



A great first place to start: www.pollinators.ie/videos/

The screenshot shows the website's header with the National Biodiversity Data Centre logo (A Heritage Council Programme) and the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan logo. Navigation links include About, Blog, Mailing List, Contact Us, and social media icons for Facebook and Twitter. A search bar is present. The main navigation menu includes Home, Partners, Record Pollinators, Ideas Hub, Newsletters, Latest News, Media, Videos, and Resources. On the left, there are links for Conferences and Interviews. The main content area is titled "Videos" and features two video thumbnails: "Creating Meadows for Biodiversity" and "Top Tips for Creating a Wildflower Meadow".

Coming soon to www.pollinators.ie a new series of blogs full of expertise & advice on how to manage & protect wildflower meadows in your community