Seeding Wildflowers

Seeding with wildflowers can be an easy way to add long-lasting life to the landscape. Wildflowers are a low water, low maintenance option that add lots of color to a natural landscape.

Spring vs. Fall Seeding

**Spring**

**+** Cool season weeds can be eliminated before seeding

**-** Forb and sedge germination will be delayed one year because of the need for seed overwintering

**-** More watering and early season mowing is required

**Fall**

**+** Fall seeding ensures high soil moisture for spring germination, thanks to the snow melt

**+** Plants naturally seed around the fall time, which means spreading seed in fall aligns with plants’ natural rhythms

**+** Fall planted wildflower seeds bloom two weeks before spring planted seeds

**+** Clay soils are easier to work with in the fall

**+** Fall seeding boasts a higher forb and sedge germination rate in the first growing season

**-** Birds forage heavily for seeds in the fall, so be sure to spread seed just before snow falls

Site Preparation

Select a sunny area that gets 6+ hours of sun per day, or 4-6 hours if using a shade mix. Avoid low, wet areas with poor drainage. Remove existing vegetation quickly by hand pulling, hoeing, or tilling. A longer term but less labor-intensive option is to smother plants by laying clear plastic sheet over the desired area. This sheet heats up the soil and kills roots and seeds. The more vegetation you remove, the quicker the site will establish desirable plants. Till or rake soil to loosen top layer. Mix in a low-nitrogen fertilizer and compost or grass clippings to amend soil.

Sowing

Depending on the look you are going for, ½ lb to 1 lb per 1,000 ft2 of seed will work great. Broadcast seeds on soil and do not mix in; buried seeds do not have enough access to sunlight to germinate. For an even spread, mix sand into seed, then broadcast by hand or seeder. To increase seed to soil contact, lightly compress seeds into soil by walking on them, or running over the area with a roller. If seeding in spring, water deeply and keep soil moist until seedlings appear.

At the end of the growing season, mow down the wildflower patch with a non-bagging mower to encourage seed dispersal for the next season.

Be careful fall seeding in cold climates! Seeding too early could cause the seeds to germinate and then freeze to death. Be sure to plant after one to two killing frost and ideally once ground temperatures are below 45 degrees.