



# NATIONAL SEED

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# *How to Plant Like a Pro!*

**Where to Plant:** Unless you are planting our Partial Shade Mix or Woodland Species, choose a spot with as much sun as possible. For wildflowers, full sun is best. Most all soils are acceptable -- if any plant has grown in the spot, it should support wildflowers, which are tough and will adapt to the soil you provide for them.

**When to Plant:** In spring when there is no further chance of a killing frost, meaning that your night time temperatures are maintaining 45 degrees and above. If you miss spring, you can plant in summer unless the weather is very hot. Fall planting, in areas with freezing weather, must be after a killing frost. A killing frost usually happens at 28-32 degrees Fahrenheit. Fall-planted seed sprouts and blooms several weeks earlier than spring planted seed. A fall planting is a dormant planting - seed germinates in the spring. In areas of no frost, plant as your rainy season begins. You can plant wildflowers in all three seasons.

**Now's the time to be thinking about next seasons wildflower garden! Get a head start now on your bloom for next year.**

**Soil Preparation:** This is the most important step in obtaining success of your wildflower planting, whether it is a small garden or a large meadow. Remove all existing growth, either by hand or by roto-tilling. Till only deep enough to remove all old roots. Deep tilling may bring up dormant weed seeds lying beneath which will compete with your flowers. If you want to be sure your soil is "weed seed free", you'll have to till, wait for the crop of new weeds to grow, usually one to three weeks and then do one of two things; kill them down with one of the safe, non-residual herbicides such as "Round-up" or to till again as in step one. If you use the herbicide method, then once the weeds are dead, rake them out and seed your wildflowers without roto-tilling again. If using the roto-till method, you can seed after the second or third tilling.

**About Fertilizer:** When you choose to plant wildflowers there is usually minimal weeding done...and fertilizer will encourage the weeds and grasses. Fertilizer is not necessary for a great wildflower garden or meadow. (No one fertilizes in the wild or along roadsides), but if you want this extra boost for your flowers, fertilize only where you are willing to weed.

**Sowing:** Once your soil is prepared and free of previous growth, it's important to sow immediately. (If you let time go by between preparation and spreading your seed, you're giving possible weeds an advantage over your wildflower seed). You can use a hand crank seed sower, but most simply scatter the seed by hand. If you want to be sure to get good, even coverage, divide your seed into two roughly equal parts, in two buckets or cans. Then add clean sandbox sand to both halves, roughly 4-5 parts of sand to 1 part of seed. The sand does two things: It "dilutes" the seed, making it easier to sow evenly, and since it's light-colored, it shows you "where you've been" on the dark soil as you go. Next, sow one bucket's mix over your whole area. Then go back in the opposite direction and do the same with the second bucket. This way, you should have even spreading and no bare spots. Once seed is sown, do not rake or cover it in any way. If you can, use a lawn roller or lay down a large board and walk on it to compress (squash down) the seed into the bare soil. Remember, some of the seed you're sowing is tiny; even the lightest covering of soil can stop it from germinating. Keep your new seedbed moist until seedlings are about 6-8" tall. After that, they should be self- sufficient; however watering during droughts will keep your flowers blooming.

**Know your Annuals, Perennials, Biennials:** If you are planting one of our regional mixes, your seed is approximately 50% wild annuals, which will bloom the first year, and 50% wild perennials, which won't bloom until the second year. The annuals are quick-growing, quick-blooming and will bloom for months, and then die with a killing frost. Most do reseed, but the seed must fall on bare ground to re-grow the next spring. Perennials are the flowers that "come back every year" from the same roots, forming expanding clumps in your meadow over the years. Biennials bloom the second year, and are killed by that year's frost. However, they are heavy re-seeders, and usually reappear in the meadow.

**Maintenance:** The amount of work you want to put into your meadow area is up to you. The only requirement is a once-a-year mowing in fall after killing frosts—to disperse seed and to keep down brushy growth. Another good practice is to identify areas that have become weak or weed-filled, and to reseed those spots, the same way you repair bare spots in a lawn. Once you are able to identify weeds, hand pulling is a viable method of control for the small to

medium garden. Any weed that you can pull will constitute to the success of your garden for years. One weed can disperse thousands of seeds, so get 'em out of there if you can. If you have a large planting and you notice an area of weeds, then the above method of re-tilling and re-seeding that area is your way to obtain maximum success.

**Be Patient and Enjoy!**

Be patient while your garden or meadow establishes but once it has you'll notice small wildlife, many birds, butterflies and other insects that are attracted to your wild garden; observing these visitors is one of the greatest pleasures of growing wildflowers. Mow paths through your meadow, put in benches and bird-feeders, and enjoy it all for years to come.



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