

How to create a medium meadow a plot larger than 2 m²



© Glenn Norris / SWF

City of Meadows



Schools helping nature thrive in Brighton & Hove



Sussex
Wildlife Trust



Brighton & Hove
City Council



Brighton & Hove environmental education



Brighton & Lewes Downs
UNESCO World Biosphere Region



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK TRUST



Option 1: Let the grass grow long

If you've got a patch of existing grass you want to turn into a meadow, you could simply leave it uncut from March onwards to see what grows naturally, given the chance.

This approach is most likely to work if you can see a variety of different leaves in amongst the grass, like clover, daisies, buttercups and self-heal. There will be seeds hidden away in the soil too, which will germinate if given the chance.



© Fran Southgate / SWT

Tip

When adding plug plants, create a 3 inch diameter area free of grass before planting

You could try leaving one part unmown, and sow another part with seed or introduce some plug plants – remember to create a patch of bare soil before sowing/planting.



© Neil Fletcher / SWT

Tip

Yellow Rattle is a great plant to introduce to grassy areas – it is known as the 'meadow maker' as it weakens grasses, giving flowering plants a better chance to grow



Thank you for helping us create a City of Meadows.

By working with schools across the city, we can create a network of pollinator habitats throughout the city, helping nature thrive in Brighton & Hove.



© Trevor Dines / SWT

Option 2: Strip and sow

1. Choose a plot

- Wildflowers grow best where they'll get plenty of sun
- Pick somewhere you know can remain a meadow for the foreseeable future
- It doesn't have to be flat – a slope or bank can work well
- Bear in mind you'll need easy access to water, manage and enjoy your meadow

2. Check your plot

Check what's already growing on your plot – it might already be a great habitat for wildlife if there are lots of wildflowers or colourful fungi, and you don't want to damage what you've already got. Most areas managed as school grassland will be suitable for meadow creation

3. Prepare your plot

You need to start with bare soil, so strip the existing turf and/or remove any existing vegetation. Good preparation is essential for success.



© Sam Roberts / SWT

Tip

Use a garden spade to cut small squares in the turf (e.g. 30cm x 30cm) and dig out each square individually until you've cleared the plot entirely. For larger areas, consider using a turf stripper

4. Remove the topsoil

Remove the the first 5-10cm of topsoil – this reduces the fertility of the soil and will favour the growth of wildflowers over rampant weeds. You can use the topsoil to create a bank near your meadow.

5. Firm & Rake

Firm and rake the soil to create a fine seedbed

Tip

Get rid of any large clumps of soil and create a lovely fine, crumbly bed for your seeds to lie on. Make sure it's firm though, so your seeds don't sink too deep!



© Mike Curnock / SWT

6. Scatter your seed

Scatter your wildflower seed evenly across the whole plot. It helps to sow half lengthways along the plot, then half widthways – and you can mix your seed with sand or fine peat-free compost to make scattering easier. Give it a gentle water.

Tip

A little goes a long way! Just 3-5g of seed is enough for one square metre of soil



7. Firm & Rake (again)

Rake lightly and firm the bed by walking over it, or using a small roller.

Tip

Don't add any mulch, manure or fertiliser – wildflowers flourish on nutrient-poor soils

8. Water

Keep an eye on the weather and water your mini meadow so that the soil doesn't dry out – aim to keep it moist but not soggy

9. Wait and see!

Your seeds should sprout after 2 – 3 weeks. Make sure you mark your area clearly – roping it off, creating a small protective fence or a mound from the removed turf. This will stop your students running over it and also make it clear to whoever maintains your grounds, that it is a special area, requiring special maintenance.

Tip

Create a sign for your meadow, letting your wider school community know you're part of our City of Meadows and why this is important.



Caring for your meadow...

TBC - Will depend on seed mix / planting approach / meadow size etc.

You may want your students to collect the seeds before they drop

Cut your meadow once a year, in late August or September. It'll probably be too high for a mower, so you'll need grass shears and lots of helpers! Cut in dry weather and leave the cuttings to lie on your meadow for a week or so before removing and composting them. This allows seeds to drop and replenish your meadow. It's important to remove the cuttings so that they do not enrich the soil.

Alternatively, leave your meadow (or part of it) uncut over winter and mow in early spring. The dead stems will provide excellent insect hibernation spaces over winter

You may want to 'top-up' your meadow in its first years of life by sowing more seed to fill any bare patches.

Why not also add some bee or insect homes? Check out some ideas at: www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/discover/in-your-garden

Tip

It takes time for a meadow to establish, and most will evolve over several years into a truly beautiful display of flowers full of bees, butterflies and other insects.

