



**Wildflowers add a wonderful variety of colour** to any garden or community space. But more importantly, they provide bumblebees and other insects with food, shelter and habitat.

**In the past 80 years large areas of wildflower habitat have disappeared** from the countryside. This has left bumblebees with little to feed on, and is strongly linked with bumblebee numbers declining in many places.

**However, you can 'Bee the Change'!** **Wildflowers** can happily grow outside in containers. If you don't have access to a patch of soil, it's a great place to start, especially for balconies or a paved area.



Photo: AVLAN, Alton and Villages Local Action for Nature



## Which wildflower seed should I choose?



**Annual mix** – an annual is a wildflower or plant that normally only flowers once. They provide lots of beautiful blooms for bumblebees. In the autumn, seed heads from Annuals drop seeds into the soil, so you may see them again next year.

**Perennial mix** – this mix should come back year after year and is a low maintenance option if you choose not to switch your wildflower patch or container each year. This mix works best for large areas. We would recommend growing a mix of UK native wildflowers for best results.

There are many different wildflower seed options you can choose from, including a mix specifically for bumblebees and pollinators or wildflower seeds for shady areas. You may have your own seeds you have harvested in readiness for this job!

### Don't forget to think about your seed mix

If you are sowing a seed mix that includes arable 'weeds' like cornflower, corn cockle,

and corn marigold for a larger land area, then removing vegetation first, gives you the best chance of success.

However, wildflower seed that contains meadow species, e.g. yellow rattle, bird's-foot trefoil, clovers, or knapweed, can be sown into scarified grass very successfully – this may be an easier option in some cases, as you can cut the grass short, and sow the seed directly after cutting and raking the grass. Sowing this type of seed into a pot can be just as successful if you don't have much space!



**Seeds collected from flower head ready to be sown in spring or autumn.**



# Follow these simple steps to sow your seeds...



**1** You can sow your seeds either in spring or autumn. Make sure the soil is not too wet or dry and avoid that urge to add topsoil, as native wildflowers do well on low nutrient soil!

**2** Your sowing area needs to be grass free. Grass can grow quickly and strongly and can stop the wildflowers from growing. You don't want any competition for the wildflowers!

**3** Once the soil is fine and crumbly, no big lumps, give it a good rake over so it's nice and flat as lumpy soil could bury the seeds.

**4** It can be useful to leave your patch unsown for a couple of weeks so any grass or weeds can be removed before you sow – but don't worry if not.

## **5** The exciting bit!

Mix your wildflower seeds with something like dry, fine sand in a bucket – if you can, this helps you spread it more evenly on the ground and everyone can have a handful.

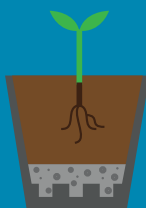
**Sprinkle seeds by hand** evenly over the surface.

**6** **Rake the soil again – gently** to cover the seeds with a very thin layer of fine soil – seeds need **sunlight** to germinate so try not to bury them.

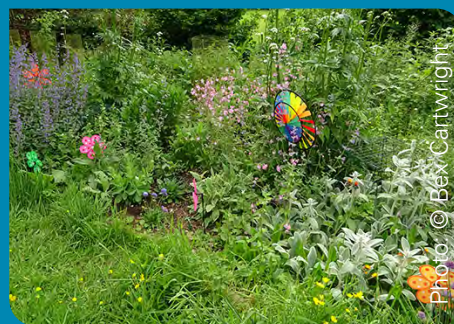
**7** **Carefully water the area using a watering can.** Label the area with plant markers and date.

## Top tips

- If you are using a container, make sure it has a few holes in the base and add a few stones or broken crockery to the bottom to help drainage. Wildflowers won't survive in cramped spaces so try to use larger containers such as a half barrel, oversized pots or even an old tyre!
- Move your container to your chosen space before filling it; an empty container is much easier to move than a full one.
- Water regularly in summer and less in autumn!



**Note:** if sowing in autumn, the seeds will grow a little then stop until the following spring, so don't worry!



[www.bumblebeeconservation.org](http://www.bumblebeeconservation.org)

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