

GROWING WILDFLOWERS



Site Selection: When choosing a site, consider:

1. Does the site support plants now? If nothing is growing, the site is unlikely to support wildflowers.
2. Will there be adequate moisture during germination? Can you supply additional water?
3. What weed seeds are likely to be present in the soil? The fewer weed seeds there are the more successful the planting will be.

When to Plant: Late fall or very early spring is best. The perennials in the mixes need to undergo several freeze/thaw cycles to break the natural seed dormancy. Rocky Mountain and Xeriscape Mixes have more annuals in them, and are more successfully planted later in the spring. The primarily perennial Montana Native Mix should be planted in November or March/April for necessary cold stratification.

Seed Application: It is helpful to mix 1 or 2 parts sand to 1 part seed for even distribution. Rake in lightly, covering seeds to a maximum depth of 2-3 inches, or drag the area lightly with a piece of chain link fence.

Mixing With Grasses: To create a natural meadow, prairie, or colorful lawn effect, the wildflower seeds can be mixed with bunch type grasses. A mix of at least 10% flower seeds to 90% grasses will give a good show of color. To maintain this planting, mow or burn the areas in the Fall.

Moisture: In an irrigated area, soak the area thoroughly and maintain consistent moisture for 4-6 weeks. In a non-irrigated area, plant in fall or early spring before anticipated snow or rainfall. After seedlings are established, watering may be reduced. In arid regions, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of supplemental moisture per week may be needed to maintain optimum color.

Fertilization: Do not apply fertilizer because it will encourage weeds and leafy growth. Do add organic matter such as weed-free grass clippings, well rotted compost, peat moss or leaf mold.

Weed Control: If wildflowers are planted in a weedy area, there will be a large bank of weed seeds

that will germinate. Weed control is achieved in two stages —initial clearing of the site and ongoing maintenance. If spring planted, allow the first growth of weeds to germinate and remove them before planting wildflower seed. Mixing the wildflowers with clover and fescue can help them compete with weeds. After wildflowers have germinated, further weed control is usually necessary. If practical,pull all weeds as soon as they can be identified.

Maintenance: *Wildflowers may be mowed to a height of 4-6 inches in the Fall after seeds set. Leave the residue on the ground as a reservoir of viable seeds.*