

WILDFLOWER PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Determine your soil type.

Sandy soil dries out quickly, may be low in nutrients and have a low pH. Be prepared to add supplemental water to germinate your wildflower seed. Adding additional organic matter, such as compost, will increase the soil's water holding capacity, and add nutrients.

Loamy soil contains more organic matter than both sandy or clay soil and therefore retains adequate moisture while providing necessary drainage. These soils are the easiest to prepare for wildflower seeding and provide an excellent planting site.

Clay soil is heavier than sandy or loamy soils. It retains water easily, but does not allow proper drainage for most wildflowers. If it dries out during a hot summer, it becomes hard and prevents wildflower roots from penetrating deeply into the soil. Clay soils benefit from added organic matter to increase drainage.

2. Remove existing vegetation. Reducing competition for space, light, moisture and soil nutrients is essential to the success of your wildflowers. This can be done by smothering, mechanical removal or by using herbicides.

Smothering: vegetation on small areas can be killed by covering the area with black plastic. The increased soil temperature will kill weed seeds, while the lack of sunlight and moisture will kill existing vegetation. For the full effect, leave the plastic in place for at least 2 months.

Cultivation: using this technique alone will require repeated passes, at 2-3 week intervals, to be effective. This is because tilling will bring to the surface more dormant weed seeds which will interfere with your wild flower planting.

Herbicides: using herbicides such as Round-up will usually require two applications, 3-4 weeks apart to kill the existing vegetation. After the first application, wait for the weeds to die back then remove them. You may want to till the ground before you plant your wildflowers.

3. Apply seed. For small areas, hand broadcasting the wild flower seed will work quite well. For larger areas, broadcast or drop spreaders work more efficiently. Once the seed has been planted, it must be covered to a maximum depth of 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch. This can be achieved by lightly raking the seed in with a hand rake for small areas, or by using a drag mat behind a tractor for larger areas. Care must be taken not to cover the wildflower seed too deeply as this is one of the primary reasons wildflower plantings fail.

4. Weed control. Weeds left uncontrolled will quickly take over any wildflower planting. Removal of weeds during the initial site preparation must be followed. Once germination of the wildflower species has begun, newly appearing weed should be removed.

5. Post Planting Care

The planting must be kept moist for 4-6 weeks, using supplemental water if necessary in order to ensure germination. As the planting becomes established, water can be gradually reduced. Many wildflowers are drought tolerant once established, but must receive adequate water in order to germinate and become established. You should begin to see wildflower seedlings within 2 weeks and the first flowers in 6-8 weeks. As the season progresses, several waves of color will be seen according to the blooming time of the wildflower species.

6. Fall Mowing

Once the wildflower planting has stopped flowering and set seed, it can be mowed to a height of 4-6 inches. In most climates, this will be in mid-October. Mowing will help scatter the seeds for the next year's wildflower blooming.