

Autumn News

Are you better off sowing wildflower seed this autumn?

Many seed mixes can be sown in either the spring or the autumn, but many expect there to be less benefit to sowing in the autumn. Although sowing in the spring is often favoured there are many benefits to sowing in the autumn, and it is now becoming a more recognised and accepted practice. It is now believed that the optimum sowing time for seeds is between August and the end of September, since this is when most seeds tend to shed naturally.

Seeds that are sown in the autumn (August – October) often germinate quicker, although this does not always show until the following spring. Autumn sown wildflower meadows tend to flower earlier in the spring, as they require the winter ground frost to kick start their germination. By sowing the seeds around this time it allows for the upcoming winter frost to come along, which in turn will help to break the dormancy of the newly sown seeds.



By doing so, this then allows a higher percentage of moisture to be absorbed by the seed, creating the ideal growing conditions for the seed to germinate. Another benefit of sowing the seeds in the autumn is that the risk of bird damage is greatly reduced, as there is often an increase in available food sources for the birds within the autumn months.

It is not advised however, to sow the seeds later than the end of October (for example November – February), unless there is a definite mild winter on the way, as too much frost can damage the seed, and directly kill off any chance of germination through the winter.

Although sowing in the autumn has many benefits it is also dependant on the soil that they are being sown into. If the soil is waterlogged or wet for a prolonged period during the winter, it would have the direct opposite effect to what is desired.

By sowing the seed into excessively wet soil, has no benefit to the seed, in fact it will begin to rot away rather than germinate, therefore checking that the growing conditions of the soil prior to seeding is essential.

If you wish to plant a wildflower mix into heavy / damp soil it is often advised to wait until the following March – April to prevent the risk of rotting the seeds.

There are two types of seed mixes which each favour different soil types, Perennial seeds can sometimes take up to a year to emerge if they are planted in the spring months. These plants thrive

best in poor soil conditions which allows the flowers to grow with less competition from the surrounding grasses.

Annual wildflower seeds, especially cornfield annuals, need to be planted into rich soils and these wildflower mixes often flower within 3 months of being sown.

The best soil to sow the seeds in would be light, well-drained soil, if wishing to sow the seeds in September. Autumn sowing favours such plants as Wild Red Poppy and Cornfield seeds, whereas spring is favoured by Corniculus and Corn Marigold.

When clearing the ground in preparation for the wildflower mixtures, it is advised to wait a minimum of 2 weeks between clearing and weeding the ground and sowing the seeds, this allows the ground time to settle, this allows the seeds a greater chance of the seeds establishing and producing the desired meadow effect.

