

## Benefits of Converting Your Lawn into a Meadow

Traditional lawns take a lot of time and money to maintain and have very limited environmental benefits. By converting a portion of your lawn to meadow, you will not only increase valuable habitat and resources for pollinators and other animals, but you will save yourself the time and money conventional lawns require. If done properly, a wildflower meadow is an environmentally-friendly landscape component that, once established, will have minimal maintenance requirements.

So, what is a wildflower meadow? Wildflower meadows are complex, interactive communities of plants that provide essential natural benefits. Wildflower meadows are valuable habitat, providing pollen, nectar, seed resources, nesting sites, and a protected environment for our native bee and butterfly species. Additionally, many birds, bats, and small mammals thrive on the food and shelter that wildflower meadows provide.



Pictured above: Conventional lawns provide very limited environmental benefits, whereas meadows have many environmental benefits.

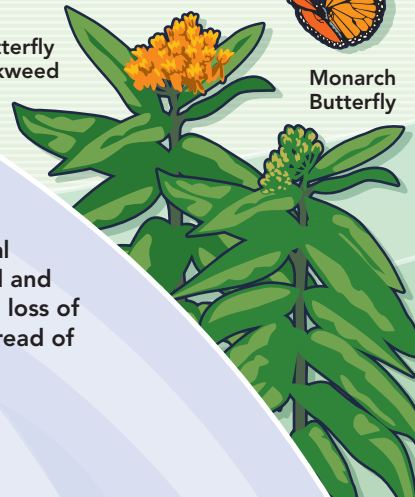
## Did You Know?

Globally, about 90% of flowering plants depend on pollination by bees, butterflies, and other insects and animals. Many of the foods we eat and drink to the clothing we wear, or medicines we take, are made possible by pollinators. Without pollinators, many plants would not be able to develop fruits or seeds, and in many cases the plants would not exist at all because they would be unable to reproduce and grow the next generation of plants. Pollinators are also incredibly important to the natural world, they pollinate many of the plants that wildlife depends on for food and shelter. Unfortunately, pollinator populations have been in decline due to loss of habitat, climate, change, the use of pesticides and herbicides, and the spread of invasive plants.

Bumblebee



Butterfly Milkweed



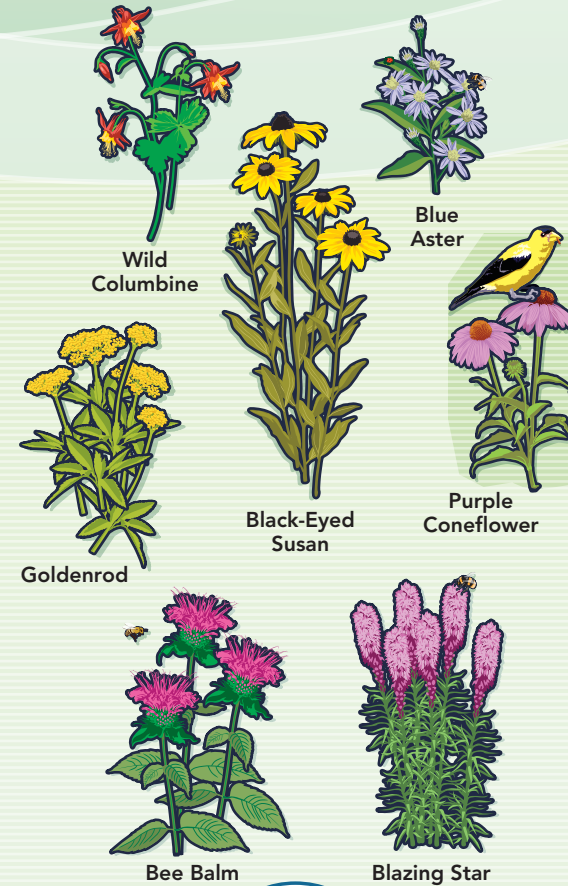
Monarch Butterfly



Black Swallowtail Butterfly



## Wildflower Examples



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# Say Goodbye to Mowing:



## Turn Your Lawn into a Meadow

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# How to Start the Transition from Lawn to Meadow:

## SEED MIX

Choose a native or regional wildflower seed mix. There are a few things to keep in mind when choosing a seed mix. First, choose a seed mix that matches the sun and soil conditions, as well as the moisture levels of that area after a rain event. Second, decide what type of mix you would like or if you want one for a specific purpose, such as a pollinator mix. Measure the length and width so that you can calculate the area, which you'll need to know to order seeds. Lastly, make sure you buy your seeds from a reputable source, such as Prairie Moon, Ernst Seeds, or American Meadows.

## SELECTING A PLANTING SITE

Not all wildflowers are suitable for all planting conditions. A site with at least six hours of sunlight per day and soil with good drainage is ideal for many species of wildflowers. If you choose a partly shady or wet area, be sure to choose a wildflower mix that is suitable for these conditions. Also, consider areas that are difficult to mow, such as slopes or rocky areas.

## PREPARE YOUR PLANTING AREA

To begin the transition from lawn to meadow, start by removing the existing vegetation. It is important to remove or kill grass and other vegetation because those plants will compete with the germinating wildflower seeds for light, water, and nutrients.

1. Remove the sod by hand or with a rented machine like a sod-cutter or mow the grass as low as possible. See "Pocket Meadows" for info on how to solarize smaller areas.

2. Next, loosen the top few inches of soil with a tiller or hard rake to create an ideal environment for the wildflower seeds to germinate. You will need to till or turn the soil two to three times over a 6 to 12-week period to exhaust seed banks.

3. Lastly, rake the area flat to prepare the soil for sowing.

## SOWING THE SEED

The ideal time of year to seed your meadow is mid-October through early-March. Choose a windless day to begin seeding. Place half your seeds in a bucket or hand-crank seeder. Begin to evenly scatter the seeds by walking back and forth in roughly parallel rows, doing your best to portion the first half of the seeds evenly over the whole planting area. Repeat this process with the remaining half of seed but walk in the adjacent direction. After you're done seeding, begin compressing the seed onto the soil surface. This can be done by walking over the area or renting a lawn roller.



## MAINTENANCE

The first year, mow no more than three to four times, setting the mower to a height of 6-8". This will cut down weedy species, while allowing the native flowers, which tend to put first-year energy into their roots, to thrive. After the first year, mow your meadow once per year, preferably once in the spring. This prevents shrubs and trees from colonizing the area, while giving pollinators time to emerge from their winter homes. Keep an eye out for invasive species in your meadow, and remove them as you find them. Some common invasive plants include: Japanese honeysuckle, English ivy, or chickweed. If you wish to check whether a plant is invasive or not, use the United States Department of Agriculture website. Type in the scientific name or common name in the search bar, and the results will show you whether the plant is native or invasive to your area.



## Pocket Meadows

If you don't have room for a full-sized meadow on your property or are unsure about dedicating a large portion of your lawn to meadow, try planting a pocket meadow! For a pocket meadow you can use plugs rather than a seed mix. In early spring, choose your planting site, then mow the area with the blades on the lowest setting. Next, cover the area with clear plastic or cardboard and keep covered through the summer. This process is called solarization. In the fall, you can plant your plugs, but be sure to use native plants!

## Did You Know?

Pollinators overwinter in different life stages: eggs, larvae, pupae, and adults. Some pollinators overwinter in the hollow stems of plants, while others attach to a plant or overwinter in the leaf litter. To protect overwintering pollinators, don't cut down your perennial gardens or meadows until spring or early April and keep beds of leaves intact through the winter.



Pictured above:  
Japanese honeysuckle (top)  
and English ivy (bottom).

## Your Meadow will Help Improve Water Quality in the Nanticoke Watershed

Did you know that plants are the first line of defense when it comes to erosion control and stormwater management? As rain or melting snow drains off the land, it picks up pollutants such as trash, leaked engine fluids, pet waste, and lawn fertilizers. Even a small amount of rain can cause these pollutants to be picked up and carried into storm drains or directly into waterways. This polluted water is called stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff can cause many different problems for our local environment and waterways. Plants help mitigate this.



- Plants' deep roots hold the soil in position, thereby reducing erosion because much less soil is carried away where plants or vegetation exists.
- Plants also help absorb and trap some of the pollutants in stormwater runoff before they can reach nearby waterways.

Lastly, native plants are adapted to the local conditions in your area. Because native plants are so well adapted to their environments, they require no fertilizer, pesticides, or herbicides, and once established, they require little to no watering. By shrinking your lawn, you reduce chemical inputs used in your yard, which limits chemical-based runoff entering your local waterway.