

## episode 82 show notes and advice

### Episode Description

The weather has not been on the side of container gardening this summer and if, like many of us, you've been struggling to keep up with all the watering, a great alternative to pots and containers, is wildflower gardening. Requiring very little maintenance, wildflowers will flourish pretty much anywhere, do well in extreme weather and are great for the biodiversity in your garden. Now is the perfect time to start sowing a wildflower garden, so don't take off your gardening gloves and boots just yet as there is still lots to do over the coming weeks.

### In this episode, discover...

- How to grow a wildflower garden in a redundant veg bed
- Arthur's quick and easy method for creating wildflower patches of any size
- The Great Dixter cuttings that are helping to spread wild orchids through the south of the country
- Extending the season with half-hardy wildflowers
- What to do with perennial wildflower seeds to get them germinating quicker
- Using Yellow rattle on lawns to help your wildflower meadows flourish

## episode 81 advice sheet

If you have any redundant but well-maintained veg beds in your garden, these are ideal places to grow a low-maintenance wildflower garden, as there are unlikely to be lots of perennial rooty weeds, like ground elder or bindweed.

This was the case with Arthur's Grandmother's Garden, where a former leek bed was repurposed as a wildflower patch back in 2016. Now in 2022, the wildflowers are really flourishing. It's been such a success, Arthur has created a second wildflower patch in the front garden, using cuttings from the back.

Arthur started the new wildflower garden quite naturally, with self-seeding foxgloves and Opium poppies, which arrive when you're digging for your veg, as the poppies love the disturbance. He then chucked on some Butterfly seed Bombs, and over time, the new wildflower garden slowly became its own little creature, even intermingling with the herb bed next door, and all requiring very little management.

They now have a real marzipan mess of Oxeye daisy, perennial cornflower, yarrow and great swathes of marjoram creating dense carpets, with lemon balm all mixed in - a real highlight for Arthur. Consequently, the whole wildflower square is a constant buzz of insects.

### Arthur's tips on growing and maintaining a new wildflower garden or patch

- Take out the docks every couple of months but leave any dandelions that pop up as they're good for the bees
- Remove the Oxeye daisies first as they take over and quickly look dead and messy. Although they're great if you're looking for a thuggish wildflower.
- Sarah loves the Wild carrot at Perch Hill, so cuts down Oxeye daisies to prevent them from drowning it out.
- The marjoram in Sarah's herb garden at Perch Hill is *Origanum vulgare* – the true Greek oregano. While not completely reliably hardy, it is self-seeding enough for regeneration.
- **Give your wildflower seed a cold snap:** If you're buying wildflower seeds from a shop or garden centre put them in the fridge or freezer for a week before you sow, as they respond very well to temperature fluctuations (as seed). Often wildflowers don't germinate until the winter after they've been sown, so if you put them in the fridge to allow them to feel the cold now, which forces them into thinking they've had a winter, and then sow them between September and October, they will germinate with the autumn dews.

### Arthur's 3-step method for creating more wildflower patches in your garden

- Take the rakings and cuttings (even whole stems) off an existing wildflower meadow
- Lay it onto fresh, bare soil in the area you wish to cover with wildflowers
- After 6 weeks, rake it all up and take it off. The chaff and seed will have fallen off in the interim, which will then form the foundation of your wildflower garden.

### Sarah on wildflowers and wild orchids at Perch Hill

If land has been heavily fertilised with chemical fertilisers, wildflowers will struggle, as heavy clay soil holds onto the richness as well as the fertilisers. At Perch Hill (a former farm), there is a pocket that hadn't been fertilised, which was where Sarah started with three pyramidal orchids. These three have since grown to around 30, from which they have harvested the seed, to add to the wildflower meadow just outside the kitchen.

### Sarah on meadow mixes

We are now starting to see the addition of half-hardy annuals in meadow mixes, to extend the season. So as the traditional hardy annuals like cornflowers, corn poppies and corn marigolds are going over, the half-hardies, like Cosmos, are coming into their stride. The annuals struggle in intense heat, and yet the perennials have come through looking pretty. For example, the tall and spidery *Dianthus carthusianorum*, is still looking amazing even in the heat. Over the Jubilee weekend, we had a red, white and blue mix with cornflowers, poppies and ammi flowers in it, looking absolutely splendid on the day.

### Annual wildflower meadow mixes

- These do very well on poor soil
- There are 14 annual meadow mixes and three perennial meadow mixes currently on trial at Perch Hill
- We covered the soil with some sand to suppress any weed seed germination and then scattered in the mixes, at the distribution specified – not too finely.
- If you don't have a large garden space, scatter the seeds into a pot or a window box, or next to where you park the car
- Plant them for the birds to eat the seed
- Now is a really good time to be thinking about sowing either a temporary annual meadow or a perennial meadow

### Yellow rattle

- A parasitical annual useful on lawns you wish to turn into wildflower meadows
- Flower like a lamium or a salvia
- Quite big seedheads that look like a child's rattle
- Germinate in the autumn, around September to October
- Parasitical on the roots of the stronger grasses, depleting and suppressing the strength of the grass and opening up the sward, allowing you to sow, or for you to put plugs, or for nature to sow things like orchids, wild carrot, yarrows and vetches
- Use fresh seed or get seed from a friend who has some stored from this year, or from [Emorsgate Seeds](#) or [Sarah Raven](#)

### Bulbs that naturalise well and thrive in wildflower meadows

- Narcissi
- Species tulips: 'Shogun', *Sylvestris* (scented), Lady tulip, 'Peppermint Stick'
- Grape Hyacinth *Muscari armeniacum* 'Valerie Finnis'

Mentioned in the podcast

### Gardens

#### Great Dixter bags of wildflower cuttings for your garden

One of Sarah's favourite gardens in the world is the Christopher Lloyd garden at Great Dixter, looked after by Fergus Garrett. Containing lots of grassy meadows full of wildflowers, some of this is scythe cut and then bagged up for people to take (around July/August), to create their own wildflower gardens. Put it on your lawn or grassy areas, leave it and allow the seeds to drop down in. In this small, wonderful way, Great Dixter are spreading orchids throughout the whole of the south of England – what a great legacy of Christopher Lloyd.

<https://www.greatdixter.co.uk>

### Books

#### Meadows by Christopher Lloyd with photography by Jonathan Buckley

First published in 2004 (available on Amazon)

The 2016 edition is sold through [Waterstones](#)