

# Wildflower Meadow Creation

## Wildflower Meadows

Wildflower meadows are an extremely important habitat, supporting a diverse range of species. Despite this, the UK has seen a 97% decline since the 1930's, largely due to intensified agriculture with increased field drainage and herbicide use, as well as urban encroachment into historically rural areas.

The knock-on effect of meadow land loss is the decline in biodiversity;

wildflower meadows offer a diverse and attractive habitat - an invaluable food source, breeding, and nesting habitat for insects, butterflies, birds, and small mammals. Urban environments can provide the ideal conditions for the introduction of wildflower meadows, which require nutrient poor soils. Additionally, acres of land are not required - even the smallest grass verge can support a rich and vibrant plant community, capable of sustaining life.

## Ecology

Meadows are enclosed grasslands where a hay or silage crop is taken in the summer.

When creating a wildflower meadow, it is important to ensure that the plant species introduced are suitable for the soil type, so that they can thrive. Equally importantly the plant must be a native species - native not just to the UK, but also to the region where the wildflower meadow is being created. Ideally a proportion of the plant species will come from seeds collected and grown within the region / county.



Butterfly species present in Grantham that will benefit from wildflower meadow creation are Dingy Skipper butterfly, Red Admiral butterfly, Comma butterfly, and the Holly Blue butterfly.



A bumblebee supported by the introduction of wildflowers.

## Productive Habitats

A good species rich wildflower meadow is a productive habitat, providing excellent food sources for insects, caterpillars, and birds - which in turn provide a food source for predators. They also provide shelter and ideal breeding grounds.

Meadows found adjacent to wetlands provide refuge for amphibians in the form of cover as well as helping to keep the land slightly damp and giving them areas for foraging. The habitat also provides nesting material for birds and supports small mammals by providing cover, food, and nesting material.

## Pollinators

They are responsible for pollinating over a third of the food that we eat - this equates to £690 million worth of crops annually - saving us an estimated £1.8 billion every year! Despite this, pollinators are in decline and becoming extinct; 76% of all resident and migrant butterflies have declined in the UK in abundance, occurrence, or both, over the past four decades, three bumblebee species have become extinct, and the recent European Red List for Bees reports that almost one in ten species of wild bee face extinction.

The introduction of wildflower plants is proven to increase the abundance of native pollinators such as butterflies, moths, and bees, and support them through all stages of their life cycle.

They are two broad types of meadow:

- Upland** - where the climate is cooler, and wetter.
- Lowland** - where the climate is generally warmer, drier, and the environment less exposed.

Song Thrush found along the River in Grantham, named for its distinctive sweet song calls.

Good feeding and nesting sites are the backbone of the entire food chain and ecosystem and play an invaluable part of our own food supply chain; pollination from insects is vital for 35% of world food crops.

Some of the wildflower plants that will be introduced to benefit native insects and species include; (l-r) Southern Marsh Orchid, Cuckooflower and Common Knapweed.



Pollinators are a diverse group that includes bees, moths, butterflies, hover flies, flies, and beetles.

Dingy Skipper



**If you would you like to get involved?**

Please contact our Parks Community Engagement Officer [j.ashworth@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:j.ashworth@southkesteven.gov.uk)

If you would like further information about any aspect of the Witham / Sleas Blue Green Corridor Project, including how to create your own meadow, then please visit: [www.withamsleabluegreencorridor.co.uk/](http://www.withamsleabluegreencorridor.co.uk/)

You can also scan the large bar code below using your mobile phone camera.