
How to plant a wildflower meadow.



Although Mother Nature does a fabulous job beautifying the landscape all by herself, occasionally, you might have the urge to give her a helping hand by planting wildflowers.

For example, a large area of rough pasture might be fine on the back section of your property, but maybe less so if located not far from your front porch. A rolling, grassy area on the near horizon might be starkly attractive, but what if it sported more color during the growing season? Turning those areas into something more eye appealing might be a good idea. There are, no doubt, many ways you might go about this, but planting wildflowers can yield a naturally beautiful result.

Always start with step one.

First, look over the area you're interested in and come to a conclusion about exactly what you want to accomplish. Do you want to turn the area into a meadow that is dense with wildflowers? Or are you just looking for a little more color in your vista? Your decision will dictate how to approach the project and what tools you'll need to get the job done right.

Next, assess the existing condition of your targeted piece of land so you can research and choose a wildflower seed combination that will have the best chance to thrive in that environment. Assessing the composition of the soil is the place to start. Clay versus sandy versus loamy? Standing water? Dry and bare? Obviously, the availability of sunlight and water are critical for growing plants, too. And some need more than others. So make sure you understand the soil you'll be working with, the overall environment, the needs of the plants, and how much ground you want to improve. Then choose your wildflowers – or any other plant material, for that matter – in the quantities you'll need to get the job done.

Planting a meadow that's dense with wildflowers.

If you want to replace grass or pasture with a blanket of wildflowers, you'll need to virtually eliminate the vegetation that's already there. Start by using a rotary cutter on pasture grass to take what's there down as short as you can. Make sure there aren't any tree stumps, large limbs or large rocks hidden in the cutting area that could damage your rotary cutter. If the area includes saplings or small shrubs, a [Frontier Rotary Cutter](#) will cut material up to 1 inch thick and grassy material down to 1½ inches long.

Next, you'll want to disk or till the soil to get the stubble, any weeds, and their roots chopped up and turned over to prepare the soil. If your targeted area is about a half acre or less, a [Frontier](#)

[Rotary Tiller](#) would be a good choice. However, if you're planting wildflowers in an area any larger than that, a disk harrow would work better.

For a small area, use your tractor and a PTO-driven rotary tiller to till the soil just a couple inches deep. Removing as much grass or pasture as possible without bringing non-germinated seeds to the surface will reduce the ability of those plants and weeds to compete with your new wildflowers. Using a rotary tiller means operating at a pretty slow speed. Hence, you should confine its use to a fairly small plot of land.

If your planned wildflower meadow is larger, then a [Frontier Disk Harrow](#) would be a better partner for your tractor. They're available in a very wide range of sizes to fit virtually any size tractor. You can make a few passes over the area you want to cultivate with a disk harrow and do it at a higher speed than with a rotary tiller. When you're done, all the grass should be turned over, leaving a good seedbed behind.

Be aware that regardless of which approach you take, short of chemically eradicating the old grass, some of it will inevitably come back. But if you do a good job of getting the existing vegetation turned over, you should end up with a very natural looking meadow where wildflowers dominate the landscape.

Time to plant.

A [Frontier Broadcast Spreader](#) is one of the top ten implements to have in your machine shed. For a large area of land, it's a great tool for spreading seed. Plus, it's a 3-season implement, useful for spreading seed, fertilizer, and salt in the winter.

First, make sure your spreader is clean from any previous use before attaching to your tractor's 3-point hitch. A seeding tip is to mix one part of seed with 10 parts of light sand. Mix them together thoroughly then follow the Operator's Manual instructions for filling the hopper and setting the dispersal rate. Move over your soon-to-be wildflower meadow, spreading seed/sand at the seed supplier's recommended rate, typically expressed in pounds per 1,000 square feet. The seed/sand mixture helps spread the seed evenly, and because the sand is lighter color than the soil, you can easily see where you've seeded.

Finally, you'll want to make sure all your planted seed has good seed to soil contact. A chain or spike tooth harrow will do a good job of this. As you drag it over your planted seed, it pulls soil over the seed, which provides good seed-to-soil contact, and promotes germination.

The One Machine alternative.

If you're wondering if there's a faster, easier way to accomplish all of the above for any planting project, then consider a [Frontier Conservation Seeder](#). Available in either 5 foot or 7 foot working widths, it is a ground-driven machine that gently tills the ground with two spiked rollers, drops seed from up to four seed box configurations into the prepared seedbed, and uses an attached cultipacker roller to provide good seed to soil contact. And it does it all at the same time. It handles virtually any size seed, from native prairie grasses to large legumes, and requires a tractor with a minimum of only 30 engine horsepower.

For a little more insight into planting wildflowers, take a look at an article titled A Touch of Prairie in the Spring 2015 issue of [Homestead magazine](#). You'll learn more about how to return your land to the beauty of native flowers and grasses.

And remember, always read the Operator's Manual before operating any piece of equipment and follow all operating and safety instructions.

Helpful Links

[How to use a rotary cutter.](#)

[How to use a tractor mount rotary tiller in your large vegetable garden.](#)

[How to renovate a pasture.](#)

[The Top 10 implements you should acquire first.](#)

[Notes From The Field: How To Adjust And Use A Rotary Cutter. \(Video\)](#)

[Notes From The Field: How To Plant A Food Plot. \(Video\)](#)

[Frontier Rotary Cutters](#)

[Frontier Grooming Mowers](#)

[Frontier Rotary Tillers](#)

[Frontier Broadcast Spreaders](#)

[Frontier Disks](#)

[Frontier Conservation Seeder](#)

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