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## **Maintenance Guidelines**

Following the installation of your Sky Garden living roof, a maintenance schedule should be set up to ensure its upkeep and longevity. It is important to recognise, that although our systems are generally low maintenance, this does not mean they require 'no' maintenance. We recommend some basic care and attention is paid to your roof once or twice a year and particularly in the first six months after installation.

### **1. The Wildflower System**

A 'Wildflower System' attempts to bring as much variety in both fauna and flora to the roof as possible, without the unwanted weight bearing issues caused by (large trees). Our aim is to bring seasonal colour and vibrancy to the roof, but it should be noted that this more naturalistic approach to planting can cause drastically different hues and colours depending on the time of year. This is particularly noticeable when plants are under stress through lack of water or subjected to sub zero conditions.

### **2. Maintenance & Aftercare**

It is important to note that nothing grows without some care and attention. As a minimum requirement, Sky-Garden recommend that spent flower, seed heads, perennial weeds and grasses, are removed and drainage outlets are in full working order, at least once a year. This serves to promote flower development and maintain a more even flower to grass ratio. Without regular de-heading, there is the potential for grass dominance and in extreme cases the onset of root rot. It is vital to control the growth of invasive plant species and restrict the formation of monocultures, (a species which becomes completely dominant in one area). This process, if left untended can decrease plant diversity, and decrease the chances of creating a well balanced and successful wildlife habitat.

Non-native, invasive plants are also often unpalatable to native herbivores like invertebrates. Allowing these to establish, can lead to reduced food availability and restrict habitat growth as a direct result.

The above issues can however be controlled and eradicated using tailor made maintenance routines offered by Sky-Garden, which can be adapted to suit the specific needs of the roof and client.

### **3. Irrigation**

Although not recommended as standard, in some areas of the country, or in heavily exposed areas where wind erosion is an issue, we strongly recommend a temporary irrigation system or supplementary watering system is in place. If a greener more luscious looked is desired throughout dry periods, it is strongly advisable to consider the installation of an irrigation system.

### **4. Weather**

Regular checks should be made to ensure high winds or heavy rainfall have not dislodged any components of the living roof system. This is particularly important during the first few months, as the plants will not have fully rooted into the sub layers and will therefore be more vulnerable. The movement of the system is unlikely and usually only occurs in very extreme weathers. Should something become dislodged, provided it has not been damaged, simply move it back into place and water in well.

## 5. Drainage

Open drains should be checked for build up of dead vegetation and routinely cleaned periodically. We recommend a six monthly inspection as a precaution.

## 6. Fertilising

We do not recommend the use of artificial or organic fertilisers on these types of system. Sky-Garden offer annual maintenance packages at competitive prices to suit your specific needs. Please enquire for further details.

## 7. Mowing/Strimming

We recommend that, to keep the diversity of the roof high, it should be mown to control the species that populate the roof. The amount and timing of mowing will vary throughout the establishment of wildflower systems.

For new meadows, to encourage perennial flowers to develop it is important to mow the meadow in the first year after establishment. This will encourage root establishment. We recommend the wildflower meadow should be mown to a height of around 5-8cm, four times in the first year. Subsequent cuts in later years can be lower.

We recommend that you should keep mowing your lawn in late summer throughout its life. This helps the wildflowers to maintain their place in the meadow and not become dominated by grasses. If you want to attract bees and butterflies to your wildflower roof, leave the mowing to later in the year, around September, to allow them to use all the nectar that is available to them.

Once you have mown, it is a good idea to leave the initial cuttings on the ground for a few days. This allows seeds to drop for the next year. After this, however, the cuttings should be removed in order to keep the nutrient levels in the soil down and stop one species from taking over and becoming monoculture.

A strimmer may be easier to use on your roof than a mower.

## 8. Weeding

Ensure your chosen wildflowers are thriving on your roof by removing any weeds or invasive species regularly. Plants can self seed, by wind or transport with animals, so it is important these are removed before they take all the nutrients from the other plants.

If grasses become dominant, sow the wild flower, yellow rattle (*Rhynanthus minor*) in early August and keep the grass mown. This flower is semi-parasitic on grasses and should help to reduce the monoculture.

Never use lawn weed killers as they kill the wildflowers you wish to encourage.

***\*N.B Due care and attention should be taken when carrying out routine maintenance and inspections to your living roof. Some materials can be slippery when wet or frozen and we recommend safety harnesses be worn and secured ladders used at all times. If you are in any doubt, please check government guidelines for working at heights.***



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