



MAINTAINING WILDFLOWER ROOFS

Our Wildflower roofs can be cut at a number of times in the year, depending on the vigour of the meadow and which types of flowers wish to be encouraged. The key cuts of the season fall roughly into three times of year and a perennial meadow can be managed effectively with one or more of these cuts;

Spring Cut - this is useful for roofs where grass growth is very lush. Cut back to a height of 7.5cm (3in) only and complete this cut no later than the end of April.

Main Summer Cut - this is also referred to as the 'hay cut' and removes the bulk of the material, allowing it to be composted. This cut is done between late June and the end of August; the earlier cutting favours spring flowers such as cowslips, fritillary, lady's smock, selfheal and bugle; the later cutting favours summer flowers such as knapweed, devil's bit scabious and lady's bedstraw.

Autumn Cut - particularly useful for fertile sites, one or two cuts between the end of August and late November removes the surplus growth and helps keep grasses at bay to allow the wildflowers to persist.

Any cut that produces substantial clippings should have the clippings removed and composted.

GENERAL TIPS

- It is usually a good idea to leave the initial mowings in situ for a few days to allow the seed to drop to the ground but then it is important to collect mowings to reduce soil fertility
- Aim for the first cut to be 5-7.5cm (2-3in) high. Subsequent cuts can be lower to 4cm (1½in)
- Small areas can be cut with a hand scythe or strimmer (though a strimmer has the tendency to chop up the material quite small, making it harder to remove with a rake). Larger areas are best tackled with a mower. Strimmers are associated with creating plastic waste so to minimise the impact on the environment consider using biodegradable strimmer cord; static strimmer blades tend to get clogged when used for soft material such as long grass so are not suitable

WATERING AND FEEDING

A wildflower roof doesn't require much additional watering or feeding. This could alter the natural balance of plants in the area. The addition of excessive nutrients and water can encourage vigour in the grasses, which will consequently out-compete the more desirable flowering plants.

PROBLEMS

The main problem that is likely to be encountered is an abundance of weeds or dominant grasses.

- Perennial weeds - thistles and nettles for example - can either be weeded out by hand or spot treated with a weedkiller based on glyphosates, such as Roundup or Tumbleweed
- Lawn weedkillers should not be used, as these will kill the wildflowers you wish to encourage

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- Where grasses become dominant try sowing the annual wildflower, yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) which is semi-parasitic on grasses. Sow this in August and keep the grass mown until March