

Grow North in April 'How to create a wildflower meadow'

Fran Tilbrook, who participated, writes :

'We'd all been asked to bring a spade, rake and trowel, which should have prepared us for what was more of a work party than a workshop! Hard work but rewarding nonetheless.'



Our tutor for the session, Jay Jay (Gladwin – of Black Isle Garden Design) marked out the large area for the wildflower meadow in Lina's garden. This was on existing grass and included a tree which had had a large quantity of soil banked up against the trunk for many years. Jay Jay said this would need removing for the sake of the tree's health.

Everyone started lifting the turf within the marked-out area on either side of the tree, the turves being stacked neatly by Terry and Harris into a 'bund' that would compost down over time to produce loam.



Dockans and nettles were removed but Jay Jay was relaxed about dandelions because they are good for insects.

After the refreshment break, with most of the turf removed but time running out, Jay Jay suggested we fork one side of the area to be sown, cover it with soil from around the tree and rake this to remove most of the stones.

*Jay Jay had brought some pots of **cowslip** which were planted beneath the tree and watered in. She said there is not usually a need to impoverish the soil if turf has been removed. She recommended adding **yellow rattle** to a wild flower seed mix as it is a parasitic plant that feeds off grass and therefore reduces competition for the flowers. She also said that sowing with perennials was better than with annuals (though her mix did include annual poppies).*

She then put a measure of sand (builder's is OK) in a bucket and added various pinches of wildflower seeds. Her sand was damp, but dry sand is fine. Use 3gms of seed mix (1-4 tsps) per sq metre.



*Seeds used were: Initially, **Geranium** (meadow cranesbill), **agastache foeniculum** (anise hyssop) and **toadflax** (*linaria vulgaris*). As you add more seed, you add more sand. Jay Jay then threw small handfuls on to the prepared area – not in straight lines, pretty randomly, though remembering which seeds were in the batches of mix and where they*

were most suited, eg. under the tree for shade-loving plants. Then ***anchusa capensis*** and **field scabious** (*knautia arvensis*) and more agastache and meadow cranesbill. Where the seeds are large, eg the scabious, sow these individually rather than adding to the mix.

The splodges of sand with seed mix were VERY lightly raked over, the aim being not to cover the seeds up, just to make contact with the soil. Jay Jay said to leave Wednesday's rain to water them in. Other seeds included:

Ox-eye daisy from Moles Seeds, Colchester, as was the **Anchusa**

Chicory (*chicorium intybus*)

Poppy – corn or field from Tamar Organics, Cornwall

Field scabious – Scotia Seeds

Agastache foeniculum from Happy Plants, Cambridge

Mullein (*verbascum thapsus*)

Alkanet.