

Meadow for Cowgate?

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This can be a bit tricky, so first we need to try leaving an area uncut for a year and see if anything grows up. If no wildflower species grow, then we can sow some seed.

We have left areas totally uncut for possibly a year now, so I think it's onto sowing seed in a small, chosen area.

A plan:

- Cut the grass back low and rake the ground to break up the soil and bring bare patches to the surface.
- Mix wildflower seed mix with coarse sand, then scatter over the area and sprinkle some soil over the top.
- Water the seeds in and keep watering if there is a dry spell.
- The areas where two habitats meet are often the most valuable for wildlife; therefore, we will let our meadow area grow up against, maybe, a walled area..

The next stage:

- Avoid cutting this area in spring and early summer.
- Make sure we walk through the area first to scare away any wildlife that could be injured by the strimmers, then cut back the growth.
- Always remove all of the cuttings and compost away from the area.
- Pull up any vigorous undesirable plants such as nettles, thistle and docks.

Management in the future:

- For a spring flowering meadow we should strim from late June to October.
- For a summer flowering meadow, cut between late July and March.
- However if the meadow is large enough, we could strim different sections at

different times of year from early July through to early September. This will give the greatest diversity in sward and structure.

- If we continuously cut early then the plants may never set seed, but if we always cut late then the meadow will become ranker and lose diversity.
- Each time we strim, we need to aim to keep sward height low (approximately 5 cm).
- Always remove cuttings.
- Importantly, we need to leave the edges uncut where invertebrates and other animals can spend the winter. We will be able to rotate the uncut area on a 3 or 4 year cycle to prevent it becoming dominated by vigorous grasses.

Quite a task, but if we test drive a small area, we will learn!



Starting the Cut Cowgate