

Introduction

Norfolk is famous for its poppy fields and the common poppy is Norfolk's county flower. While poppies remain widespread and well-known in Norfolk many other once common arable weeds, including cornflowers and corncockles, are no longer found in the wild. Growing these attractive wildflowers in your garden is not only a colourful reminder of Norfolk's wildlife heritage but will bring your garden to life with butterflies, bees and hoverflies.



Did you know...?

- Poppies may have first arrived in Norfolk more than 5,000 years ago with the first Neolithic farmers.
- Poppy seeds can remain viable in the soil for many decades and then when the soil is disturbed will suddenly germinate and flower in profusion.
- Cornflowers are extinct in the wild in Norfolk and now only found wild on a handful of sites in England.



This leaflet will...

Tell you how to grow the types of wildflowers in your garden that were once common in wheat and barley fields in Norfolk.

How to create a colourful arable weed patch in your garden...

January to March

Dig over the area you are going to seed as if you are preparing ground for sowing vegetables. Hoe and rake after digging and weeding to create a nice fine soil to sow your seeds into.

Sow a mix of arable weed species together using at least one gram of seed per square metre. After sowing the seed lightly rake the soil to prevent seed blowing away but do not bury the seed deeply.



April to June

Depending on how clean your seed bed was you may need to do some careful weeding of vigorous plants such as nettles, docks and thistles. A few of these won't matter and will add to the wildlife value of your patch but too much competition will limit the success of your arable flowers.

June to August

Enjoy your flowers! You can collect ripe seeds from some of the plants to create new patches elsewhere.



September to December

Allow the dead stems to remain standing until all the seed has fallen and then in early winter rake off the dead material and compost. The ground should then be dug over or rotavated over the winter. It may be necessary to sow additional seed each year after digging to guarantee a good display the following summer and to carry on weeding competitor species in late winter and spring.



Species to include

A basic arable weed seed mix can include common poppy, corncockle, cornflower, corn chamomile and corn marigold, all of which were once common wildflowers in Norfolk. If you would like to include a wider range of species, pheasant's eye, night-flowering catchfly and Venus's looking glass are other very attractive flowers of arable farmland, all now rare in Norfolk.

Cornflower
Centaurea cyanus



Common Poppy
Papaver rhoeas



Corn Marigold
Chrysanthemum segetum



Corn Chamomile
Anthemis arvensis



Scarlet Pimpernel
Anagallis arvensis



Corncockle
Agrostemma githago



Buying your seeds

Many garden and seed companies sell some of the more colourful species such as corncockle, cornflower and poppy. With poppy seed check this is the common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) rather than a non-native ornamental poppy. In Norfolk a wide range of arable weed seeds can be obtained from British Wildflowers, Emorsgate Seeds or Natural Surroundings, for details telephone Norfolk Wildline on 01603 598333

Frequently asked questions

Why are flowers such as corncockles and cornflowers now so rare?

A combination of changes to the way farmers cultivate cereal crops means these flowers cannot survive within crops of wheat and barley today. A major factor is that crop seeds no longer contain weed seeds mixed in with them. After sowing, the use of modern herbicides prevents the growth of most wildflowers within the crop.

Will sowing arable weeds in my garden help other wildlife?

Yes, you will attract many species of insect including bees, hoverflies and butterflies when your plants are in flower. The bright colours of many arable weeds have evolved to attract these insects. If you grow night-flowering catchfly this is pollinated by moths and the long tubular flowers which are heavily scented will attract moths into your garden at night. All gardens need insects to pollinate flowers and fruit trees.



To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit **www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections**

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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