

Wildflower Meadow Management Report

Common View Playing Field, Stedham, West Sussex

Site Overview

Location: Common View Playing Field, Stedham

Size: Approx. 150m x 3m strip along the edge of the playing field

Ownership: West Sussex County Council (leased to Stedham with Iping Parish Council)

Land Use History: Established in the late 1960s as a playing field; regularly mown for decades.

Soil Type (assumed): Likely free-draining sandy loam, typical of the area.

Habitat Context: Surrounded by gardens, allotments, and natural areas – good potential for ecological connectivity.

Current Vegetation and Species Present

Despite long-term regular mowing, the site shows signs of remnant meadow flora, indicating good restoration potential:

- *Sweet Vernal Grass* (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) – indicator of unimproved grassland
- *Field Wood-rush* (*Luzula campestris*) – often found in old meadows and churchyards
- *Ribwort Plantain* (*Plantago lanceolata*), *Yarrow* (*Achillea millefolium*), and *Speedwell* (*Veronica* spp.) – native species persisting in the sward
- *Autumn Hawkweed* (*Hieracium sabaudum*) – low-growing perennial with bright yellow flowers; often found in unimproved grassland
- *Common Cat's-ear* (*Hypochaeris radicata*) – good for pollinators
- *Cuckoo Flower* (*Cardamine pratensis*) – moisture-loving and butterfly-friendly
- *White Clover* (*Trifolium repens*) – nitrogen-fixing and beneficial to bees
- **Ornamental Cherry trees** planted in 2023 provide seasonal blossom and structure.

This species mix suggests the site retains some botanical interest, which is important to retain and is therefore more suitable for **enhancement** rather than full re-creation.

Management Recommendations

1. Site Preparation (Late August 2025)

- **Initial Cut & Removal:**
 - Mow the selected 3m-wide strip very short (1–2cm).
 - Collect and remove all cuttings to reduce fertility.
- **Scarification:**
 - Use a pedestrian scarifier (hire locally) to open the sward, remove thatch and expose 50–70% bare soil. (<https://www.hss.com/hire/p/lawn-scarifier-thatcher-petrol>) <https://youtu.be/IITwIZ4EUQ?si=K89oexu13tElkf60>
 - The goal is to create seed-to-soil contact; do not rotovate or plough.

2. Seed Selection & Sowing (Late August – Early September 2025)

- **Core Species Mix:**
 - Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) – essential hemi-parasite to reduce grass vigour
 - Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)
 - Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)
 - Bird's-foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)
 - Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*)
 - Optional edge/partial-shade species: *Red Champion*, *Primrose*

Seed Cost Estimate for 450 m² Meadow Area

Species	Latin Name	*Sowing Rate (g/m ²)	Total Seed (g)	*Price per 100g	Estimated Cost
Yellow Rattle	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	3.0	1350	£35.00	£472.50
Oxeye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	0.5	225	£20.00	£45.00
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	0.5	225	£30.00	£67.50
Bird's-foot Trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	0.5	225	£20.00	£45.00
Selfheal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	0.5	225	£22.00	£49.50
Red Champion	<i>Silene dioica</i>	0.5	225	£25.00	£56.25
Total					£735.75

*Cost estimate for sowing the specified wildflower species over an area of 450 m², using current seed prices and recommended sowing rates from Emorsgate Seeds, Please always check the most upto date prices here: <https://wildseed.co.uk/>

- **Sowing Method:**
 - Mix seed with dry sharp sand (approx. 1:3 ratio) to aid even distribution.
 - Broadcast by hand across the prepared areas.
 - Roll or tread-in to ensure good soil contact.
- **Sourcing Seed:**
 - Use UK-native, wild-origin seed from a reputable supplier.
 - Ensure *Yellow Rattle* is fresh (harvested same year) for maximum germination.

3. Establishment Phase (Autumn – Spring 2025)

- **Post-sowing cuts:**
 - If grass regrowth occurs, mow to ~5cm in autumn and remove arisings.
 - Monitor grass height through winter – if it exceeds 10cm, carry out and additional early spring cut (Early March before yellow rattle has germinated).

4. Long-term Maintenance

- **Annual Management:**
 - **Main summer cut:** Mid-July to mid-August (after Yellow Rattle has seeded).
 - **Secondary cut:** March (optional but beneficial, especially in early years).
 - Always **cut and remove** arisings – never mulch.
- **Additional Notes:**
 - Avoid sowing cornfield annuals (e.g. poppies) – they are not persistent meadow species.
 - Avoid plugs unless irrigation is available; direct sowing is more reliable.
 - Consider transplanting existing wildflowers from within the site in autumn (e.g. Cat's-ear, Cuckoo Flower).

Seasonal Task Calendar

Month	Tasks
Late August	Initial mowing of area to short sward height. Scarify to 50–70% bare ground. Sow wildflower mix. Roll or tread-in seed; monitor for regrowth.
October	Optional light cut & collect if grass regrows vigorously
Nov–Feb	Monitor; no action unless grass becomes tall.
March	Early spring cut, remove arisings to support rattle germination.
Apr–June	Monitor establishment; leave uncut.
July	First full cut & remove – after Yellow Rattle has flowered and seeded (typically late July – Mid August).
Ongoing	Continue annual summer + spring cut. Monitor success, adjust as needed.