



**Do it yourself:**



# LAWN CONVERSION



# **Table of Contents:**

- . Why Convert your Lawn?**
- . What to Expect**
- . Your Project Timeline**
- . Plan your Plants**
- . Project Prep**
- . Step by Step**
- . Project Upkeep**

**For more information, visit University of New Hampshire's Planting for Pollinators:  
Establishing a Wildflower Meadow from Seed Fact Sheet**

**<https://extension.unh.edu/resource/planting-pollinators-establishing-wildflower-meadow-seed-fact-sheet>**

# Why Convert your Lawn?

**Meadows are more beneficial than having acres of mowed lawn on your property. Adding shrubs and flowering plants to your lawn is lower maintenance than lawn mowing and requires little watering.**

**Transforming your lawn to meadow adds more natural diversity to your property. Flowering plants attract birds and pollinators, as they use them as a food source and habitat.**



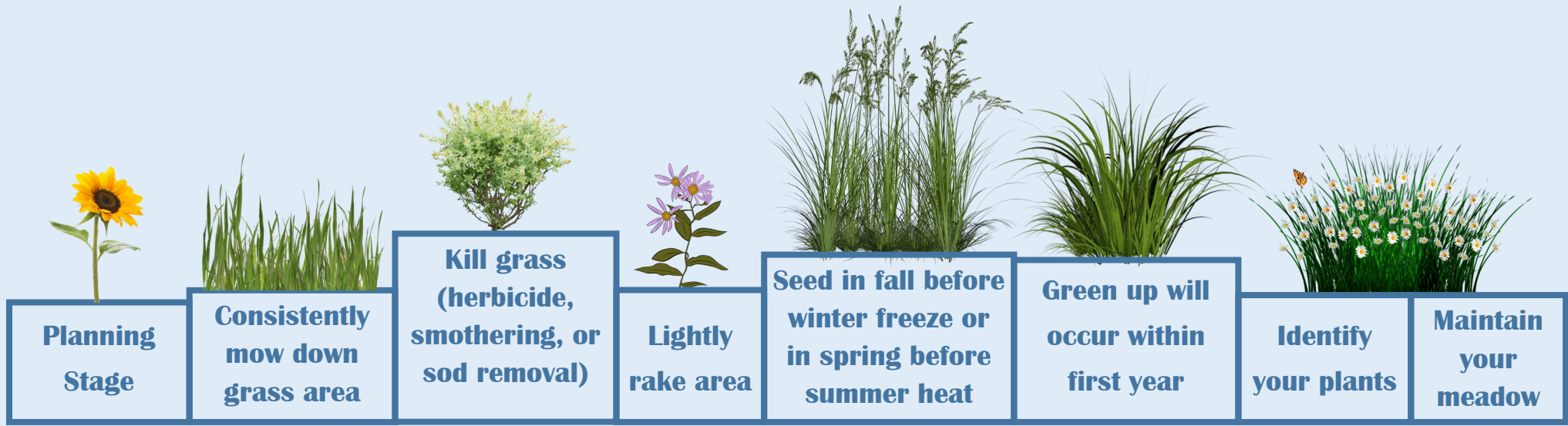
**Meadows soak up more groundwater which allows for more infiltration and less flooding. Normal turf grass has smaller roots, which does not allow for as much stormwater absorption.**

**Adding native shrubs and flowering plants to your lawn adds natural beauty and interest to your property. Lawn Conversion reflects good land stewardship.**

# What to Expect

- **This will not be a clean cut and neat looking meadow. Embrace your wild growing plants!**
- **Your meadow will be dead for at least half of the year. There is no need to mow during its dormant season, just enough to cut back on any trees or woody plants that may be growing.**
- **Be patient. Some wildflowers will not germinate for roughly 2 years after planting. Your meadow will grow with time.**
- **Expect weeds. Hand removing weeds is great, but be sure to not over maintain them. A lot of soil disturbance can leave room for more weeds or invasives to grow in the future.**
- **Your meadow will not look the same each year. Soil and weather changes will also change which plants are more dominant and which plants fade away over time.**
- **Expect animal friends! Pollinators, birds, and burrowing species will love your meadow all year round. Pollinators and birds love the flowering plants during the warm months, while burrowing species will use the dormant environment as habitat during the cooler months.**

# Your Project Timeline



# Plan your Plants

It is important to understand the land that you plan to convert into a meadow prior to selecting your seed mix. Knowing if your soil is dry or wet or if the area gets more sun than shade will determine which species will thrive in your meadow and which species you should avoid. Native flowers and grasses should always be used in your mix. Note what you want to achieve from your meadow. If you want dense foliage for animal habitat purposes, choose native, warm-season grasses. If you want to attract pollinators and add more color to your backyard, choose more perennial flowers such as Black Eyed Susan or Milkweed. Do your research!

## Native Grasses

**Big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)** – prefers sandy, loamy, clay soils, tolerates heat and drought, poor shade tolerance, moist well-drained sites

**Little bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*)** – is extremely drought tolerant

**Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)** – grows best in well-drained, deep soil, prefers full sun

**Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)** – prefers sandy, clay, and loamy soils, heat and drought tolerance, full to partial sun

## Native Wildflowers

**Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)** – great nectar source, attracts pollinators, especially monarch butterflies

**Smooth Blue Aster (*Aster laevis*)** – deer browse

**Black Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)** – easy to grow, long lasting late summer blooms

**Partridge Pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*)** – native legume

**Wild Senna (*Senna hebecarpa*)** – attracts pollinators

# Project Prep

- 1. Consider your site conditions when choosing the location of your meadow. What is the soil type? Does it get full sun? Make sure the area for your meadow is currently a well kept/mowed lawn.**
- 2. Year 1 of your lawn conversion is mostly site preparation. Continue to mow your grass as short as possible before killing it.**
- 3. Killing any grasses or weeds is essential before seeding. Wildflowers do well in soil that is low in nutrients at the start. Killing grass and weeds by smothering or herbicide will work for this step. If you are using herbicide, use with caution and do not spray when weeds are in bloom or pollinators are present.**
- 4. When using the smothering method, leave a dark plastic tarp over the conversion area from mid-June to mid-September. Avoid disturbing the soil bed when removing the tarp. Tilling and over-raking can lead to weed growth.**
- 5. Use a sod remover or simply rake away any left over dead grasses to reveal a clean soil bed. Fall is a good time to seed because germination will be enhanced during the winter months.**



# Step By Step



**1** Store seeds in a cool, dark place until ready to plant.



**2** Mix seed with equal parts of filler to help spread. Potting soil works well for this step.



**3** Divide your area into smaller plots to help spread evenly throughout. Calculate how much seed you need for each plot.



**4** Spread seed by hand as if you were feeding chickens. Spread seed as evenly as possible. Try walking in straight lines up and down your project area.



**5** When spreading is complete, assure that the seeds have good traction to the soil by using a cultipacker or simply use your feet.



**6** Cover your seeds with straw (not hay) for protection and to reduce erosion.





# Project Upkeep

Seedlings may start to appear during the spring. Mow back weeds if necessary during mid-summer about 4-6" mowing height. It is okay to go over the seedlings as they are just starting to grow strong roots rather than grow shoots for blooming. Hand weeding may disturb germinating seedlings. The following year is when growth really starts to emerge. Weeds should be less of a problem this year.

Meadows do not need a dormant season mowing every year. This is only necessary to keep shrubs or trees from growing up. Continue to monitor for aggressive weeds or invasives. You may hand remove these species during the fall when you are able to take the root completely out. Try not to do this too often as it may allow for more weeds or invasives to grow in the future. If you have a larger meadow, consider only mowing 1/3 or 1/4 of your meadow and leave the rest for wildlife habitat during the winter season.



Meadow during first growing season



Meadow during second growing season



Meadow during Summer



Meadow during Fall



Meadow during Winter