

Digging Deep

How to Cultivate a Wildflower Meadow

By Cynthia Brian

“May all your weeds be wildflowers.”*A field of wildflowers in Moraga pear orchard.**Photos Cynthia Brian*

When I was a child weeds and wildflowers were synonymous. I would meander through the hills and creeks with my handy Golden Nature Guide called “Flowers: A Guide to Familiar American WildFlowers,” along with notebook, paper and a Brownie camera to capture the images and properties of as many specimens that I could find.

Trillium, morning glory, lupin, California poppy, clover, stargazer, brodia, columbine, buttercups and mustard all captivated me. I would pick the flowers to quickly bring home to iron between wax paper and catalogue into my wildflower scrapbook. In a field of specimens, I’d dig a plant up with the attached roots to transplant into my personal flower plot.

What I found out is that wildflowers aren’t fussy. They grow in all kinds of soil, don’t need water once

they are established, and add stunning textures and vibrancy to your landscape.

1. Find a place where the flowers will get at least six hours of daily sunshine. Wildflowers need lots of sunshine.
2. Before spreading the seed, clear the dirt. Purge all weeds, grasses, or any other growth from the area. Turn the soil with a hoe or a tiller.
3. Rake the soil.
4. Add sand to the seeds at the rate of 10-parts sand to one-part seed. This will help you to see it when you spread it. Use a seed spreader if you are seeding a big area, or feel free to sprinkle by hand.
5. Don’t cover the seed with soil. It does need to be compressed for better germination either by walking on it or rolling it. I use a five-gallon bucket to roll over the seeded soil in any smaller locations.

*California poppies and wild iris makes a stellar combination during wildflower season.*

6. Water the seeds regularly until the plants reach six inches. After that, wildflowers flourish without the addition of extra water, especially great addition to any garden when there is a drought.
7. Prepare for a cavalcade of colors. Annuals bloom quickly, usually within five weeks while perennials may not blossom until the second year.

While many of these flowers are sold in nurseries as “annuals,” they are wildflowers that will look handsome in your new garden. Annuals live, bloom and die in one year. Many spread their own seeds after they are done flowering.

Here are some types of Annuals:

African Daisy	Four O’Clock
California Poppy	Gaillardia
Cleome	Lupin
Cornflower	Morning glory
Coreopsis	Shirley Poppy
Cosmos	Sunflower
Delphinium	Tithinoa
Forget-Me-Not	Zinnia

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