



Wildflower Maintenance

Understanding wildflower maintenance and the various issues that arise during growing seasons, can be a daunting task. Garrett Wildflower Seed farm offers the following tips and instructions to better ensure your garden looks and feels its best!

Weed Control

Weeds are typically the easiest problem area to spot in wildflower maintenance. Generally, many annual or perennial grasses can be controlled with post-emergent grass herbicides. However, broadleaf weed control does not have an easy solution and the options available for controlling broadleaf weeds are spot spraying and/or hand pulling weeds as soon as they can be identified. Always follow label instructions when applying herbicides.

Soil Fertility

Identifying the nutrient levels sufficient to grow and sustain wildflowers and not stimulate excessive weed growth is often difficult. Horticulturist and gardeners traditionally use fertilizers, either organic or commercial grade, to create enjoyable landscapes. Wildflowers need the same attentiveness to display nature's brilliant colors. If you desire to grow healthy and hardy plants, supply needed plant nutrients and delicate resources normally implemented for controlling unwanted weed growth.

Topdressing mixed wildflowers can be a little tricky; however, research and experience indicate that topdressing fall seeded wildflowers in late winter or early spring with a 2-1-1 analysis fertilizer (i.e. 16-8-8 or 18-9-9) can be very beneficial for plant vigor and bloom longevity. If soil fertility (plant nutrients) is adequate coming out of the winter period and anticipated weed pressure is high, you can omit fertilizer topdressing to minimize weed growth.

After the blooming period ends, the seed heads and supporting stalk structure will begin to dry and turn brown. This is a natural process in the wildflower growth cycle and the plants can be mowed to remove only the fruit bearing stalks (flower heads) or the entire plant. Generally, perennials should be mowed above the basal rosettes at a height of four to eight inches to remove the brown stalks and seed heads only. To avoid plant damage do not mow your perennials extremely low. Mowing mature, dry seed stalks will disperse new seed over the wildflower area. Be careful not to mow your area before all of your plants have bloomed. Mowing too early can damage late season bloomers.



Supplemental Seeding

Over time, if wildflower maintenance wanes, you may notice loss of plants or blooms. Plant populations in perennial wildflower plantings may need supplemental seeding in subsequent years due to natural mortality or environmental stress. If stand thinning or plant reduction is significant, then complete renovation may be the best solution. However, if desired plant populations are fair, supplemental or remedial seeding using equipment such as a sod seeder, core aerator or other minimum tillage implements can be used to improve stand density. The new seed being applied needs good seed to soil contact without major soil disturbance. CAUTION - use good judgement to get the correct ratio of soil disturbance and not totally destroy existing wildflowers. Also, remember to plant supplemental seeds in a shallow fashion. Planting too deep may yield poor germination.