

# Easy steps to wildflower meadow gardening

## SEED OR PLANTS?

Plants will definitely give the quickest, surest results; however, plants are much more expensive than

seeds. The size of your proposed meadow will help you make this decision.

## SELECT A MIX.

Choose a mix that is appropriate for your specific location and situation. Regional mixtures are designed to fit the broad cross-section or conditions that generally exist within any one geographical region.

In addition to this you must look at the local environment, i.e., variations in soil, slope, drainage, exposure, elevation and climactic conditions (rainfall, temperature range and humidity).

Most mixes contain a combination of perennials, reseeding annuals and

grasses. The grasses are non-aggressive clump grasses (e.g., Chewing's fescue and blue fescue) that grow quickly and provide soil stabilization. You can substitute a more attractive native grass for fescue but most of the natives grow very slowly and are not effective soil stabilizers during that early, crucial period. Planting wildflowers with a combination of natives and fescues is an effective alternative.

## SEED PREPARATION.

Most varieties do not require special treatment;

however, legumes such as lupine, clover and sweet pea depend on specific nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the soil for root nodulation.

In some soils, the bacteria is not present in sufficient quantities so seeds must be inoculated with the proper bacteria before sowing.

## SOIL PREPARATION.

Proper soil preparation is critical for both prompt germination of seed and the healthy growth of seedlings. (consult your county agricultural agent or local soils lab for assistance in correcting a soil problem). Common methods for breaking up soil include plowing, disking, harrowing and, if feasible, rototilling; however, we recommend only a light disturbance of the soil, such as disking.

Water- and air-holding capacities of soil may be improved by adding peat moss, weed-free straw or other organic material. Do not add fertilizer unless the soil is extremely depleted of nutrients. Fertilizers

encourage weed growth and lush foliage rather than flowers.

## WHEN TO SOW.

The best time of year to sow seed is when the soil is warm and the seasonal rains can encourage germination.

## PLANTING TECHNIQUES.

Either hand-broadcast the seed or use a mechanical device such as a cyclone seeder or a hydroseeder. After sowing, rake the seed lightly into the soil. Keep the ground moist until the seedlings appear. Germination will usually take place within two to three weeks.

## MAINTENANCE.

Water seedlings if plants are stressed by dryness. Once the wildflowers are established, relatively little maintenance is required unless there is a weed problem. Mowing once in the late fall or late winter will help prevent unwanted volunteer hardwoods. Some reseeding will be required each year for maximum effect.

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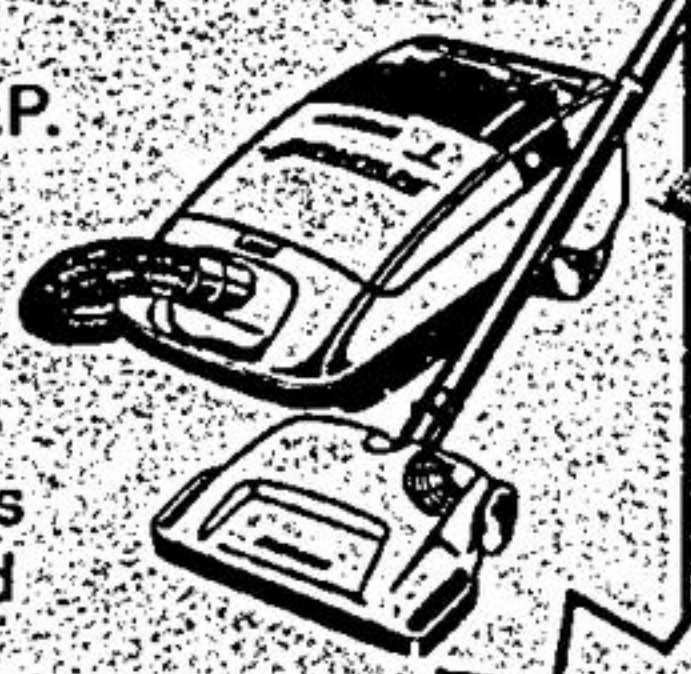
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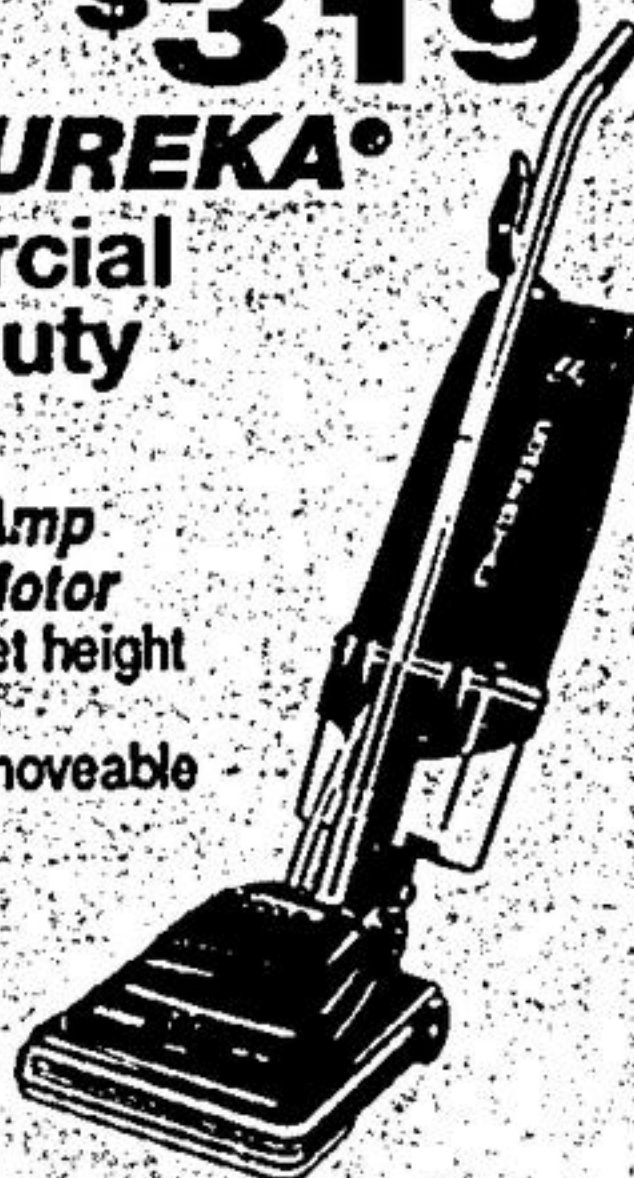
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