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Save energy - grow a meadow

The word "meadow" makes us think of waving grasses dotted with wildflowers.

How fortunate are those who can look out the window and survey their own meadow.

People with large one and two acre lots could save hours of grass cutting time by simply letting a part of the property become a meadow.

Even if you have only an average size lot, the back portions or the area along fence lines could have the natural look. Difficult to mow slopes and ditches are also good future meadows. Many people have tried to transform a bare spot by shaking a meadow from a can - the results are usually not as you imagined.

Seeds and seedlings have trouble coping with the grass. If you remove the sod and till back the soil you have stimulated hundreds of weeds into growth. The best way to get a meadow is to simply stop cutting the grass and let Mother Nature regenerate the area - witness the road sides that are no longer cut and sprayed.

However, this method may not be quick enough. A few years ago, thanks

to a broken lawnmower, the grassy road allowance on the other side of our lilac hedge did not get cut as had been the custom. In July, the most amazing thing happened - among the grass were dozens of coreopsis plants that burst into golden bloom. Obviously they had been there patiently waiting for a summer when they would not have their heads chopped off.

Last September, after reading the book *The New Perennial Garden* by Noel Kingsbury, I cut the grass, removed 12 inch circles of sod and planted large perennials into the existing soil. I chose plants that in their natural habitat coexist with meadow grasses - daffodils for early spring (their ripening foliage is hidden by the growing grass. Blooming next is *Hesperis matronalis* (Dames' Rocket) in shades of pink, mauves and white. They are followed by *Geranium pratense* (Meadow Cranesbill), *Geranium pyrenaicum* which has the ability to self-seed event into an established lawn. I also added *Liatris spicata* (Gay Feathers) and *Echinacea* (Loneflower) and I expect that wild asters and gold-



Let's Get Growing

Marjorie Mason Hogue

enrod will move in without my help. The star performer will still be the coreopsis which have now self-seeded into the gravel driveway.

A meadow garden requires almost no maintenance. The best soil is one that is poor and it should not be fertilized because this will allow the grass to become too vigorous and overpower the flowers. Once a year cutting will prevent the growth of woody plants - this could be done in November but if you wish to leave the seedheads to nourish the birds, then make your cut in early spring before the bulbs come up.

Some of the other suitable meadow flowers are achillea (yarrow), aquilegia canadensis (honeysuckle), leucanthemum (ox-eye daisy), monarda (bergamot), hemerocallis (daylily), or any other plant that is too vigorous for your garden such as *Artemisia Silver King*.

I will be presenting a free water gardening seminar at 10 a.m. on Saturday June 14. Please call 905-649-3532 for directions.

Send your comments or questions to:
Let's Get Growing
c/o The Tribune
88 Brock St. W.
Uxbridge, Ont.
L9P 1R4

Dandelions?

Dear Editor,
Seeing all the dandelions in the fields and on the lawns it breaks my heart to see them go to waste. Here is a good recipe for a wine that's cheap to make and has medicinal qualities, or so I am told, but tastes good!

Dandelion Wine

Pick 1 quart of blossoms in afternoon sun, just the tops, no stems

Place in plastic pail or crock and pour 2 quarts of boiling water over them - stir - cover with a tea towel or plastic and leave for three days - stir once a day.

Dump this mixture into a large stew pot and add:

6 cups of sugar, white or brown zest of 1 lemon and 2 oranges

2 tblsps. malt extract (kitchen scoop)

Simmer this mixture for 1 hour - strain through a sieve then add the juice and pulp of oranges and lemon, add 2 cups of sultanas or raisins or prunes or apricots your choice - chopped up fine.

Put this mixture into a crock or plastic pail adding enough water to make sure you have a gallon of liquid. Let cool, then add 1 tblsp. of either cinnamon or ginger and when it is 65 to 70 degrees F. add a package of wine yeast (Grandma's kitchen) and keep in a warm place for about a week covered with a tea towel.

Rack off into a gallon jug and place a bubbler in the bottle, if you don't have one cotton wadding will do (do not seal) rack twice more at three week intervals and bottle.

By Christmas you will have a sherry tasting wine and depending on which spices and fruits you used a little variety in tastes from mix to mix.

John Gibson

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Sunny Days

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