

Progress of the Wild Flower Meadows in Coopers Field 2014

We now had two test areas in Coopers Field to see how well the grass area would adapt to becoming a flower meadow. Both areas have done really well. The corner area (A) was sown last year with a mixture of annual and perennial seed which had done really well. We would obviously not know how well the perennial plants had done until we see flowers next year. There was some concern that certain plants seem to be quite dominant, but nature seems to have a way of sorting it's self out. So, for us it is was just a waiting game.

The area shaped like an arrow or tree was sown for the first time with yellow rattle from seed previously collected from area the first meadow. This was more successful than we had imagined and in June, Cathy and Chris spent many a happy hour on a sunny evening collecting seed to sow in the Autumn. They did get a little carried away, with almost 4kg's collected. This on the open market would be worth almost a £1000. Apparently, there are approximately 300 seeds per gram. Well over one million seeds had passed through their hands!

The seed was offered at a cheaper rate than sold on the open market, but we had no offers. However, we were lucky enough to receive a grant for the flower meadow through Bridport Community Fund (Car Boot Fund) which opened up the opportunity to expand the flower meadow quicker than we had imagined. This would mean a lot of hard work, but we may not have had this opportunity again, with seed costing over £200.

After the Parish Council had a contractor cut the grass in the field, the raking started in July in earnest. Three new rakes were purchased as we had people queuing up to take turns to rake.

Hat's off to Trevor and Nathan, a young lad on holiday in Bridport who were the only men to help the ladies, although the ladies did enjoy girly evenings busy raking and chatting at the same time! The first meadow and around the trees needed to be scythed which Jon painstakingly carried out. A local farmer could see we were struggling and offered to rake and bale the area, so we could move as much of the cut grass as possible before it started to rot down. He worked really hard, including getting one of his mates to help pick all the bales up onto a trailer by hand.

In October 2014 we had a good response from local people and children who turned up to help sow the seed to which 20 kilos of fine sand was added (kindly donated by J C Phillips and Son), to help broadcast the seed. Great fun was had by all. Firstly, meadow seed consisting of corn cockle, corn chamomile, cornflower, corn marigold, scented mayweed, forget-me-not, corn poppy, opium poppy, night flowering catchfly, wild mustard, field pansy, oxeye daisy, field scabious and wild marjoram was sown in both areas. Yellow rattle seed was sown in the top edge of the first wildflower meadow as this had not taken the previous year.

The basic general-purpose wildflower mix and birds foot trefoil and betony were sown in the second wildflower meadow, and yellow rattle seed was sown round the perimeter of this area and amongst the trees. A summer flowering butterfly and bee mix was sown along the top of o the field near the seats. This was an experiment, as we had not prepared the ground by cutting the grass short. Yellow rattle seed was also sown here to see if it would take. This proved to be successful and we had a good harvest of seed the following year from this area.

In the Autumn, the local Beaver Group were invited to make some wildflower seed bombs to be distributed in Cooper's Field. As you can imagine, making these was a very messy business, but who would not enjoy being allowed to get themselves covered in mud? The children made over 100 bombs and two weeks later, after the bombs had dried out, at dusk one evening, the Beavers armed with their bombs excitedly ran to the top of the field and "bombed" the area. There was a lot of excited screaming and shouting!