

## **Progress of the Wild Flower Meadows in Coopers Field 2017**

Alan Ashpool once again collected and donated a wonderful selection of wildflower seed for the project and local people were asked to grow the seed on for planting out in late spring.

Bridport rarely gets frosts but there was a succession of frosty nights over the winter. Yellow rattle will not germinate if it has not been frosted. Usually it does not germinate in our meadows until the last days of March, so we were very surprised to see the seedlings appearing on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

Eight trays of wildflower plug plants were sown in the meadow areas. This seems to be the most successful way of introducing wild flowers to the area.

Cathy and Chris always get excited when in the spring they start seeing flowers shooting in the meadows and it was felt this year was the best so far with more flowering plants self-seeding and it was pleasing to see all the hard work put in was being rewarded with a wonderful display of flowers.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July plugs of corky fruited dropwort and oxeye daisy were planted out.

The harvesting of yellow rattle seed started at least two to three weeks earlier than last year. This is an important source of income for the group.

In June/July 2017 approx. 4 kilos of yellow rattle was harvested and approximately 3 kilos were sold. 2 kilos went to a new Woodland Trust site at Alhampton Somerset and the rest sold to individuals for their own projects.

At the end of July, once all the yellow rattle seed was harvested and the flowers had gone to seed, cutting the meadows started and raking up the hay, although it was three weeks later than last year, due to all the rain. It was a boon to have our own tractor now to cut the grass and every opportunity was taken by Cathy and co. to be out there when the weather was fine mowing and to start the laborious task of raking. We investigated the possibility of purchasing an attachment to go on the back of the tractor to do this for us, but it would still mean having to move the raked piles of grass. This is still an ongoing possibility. In the meantime, a local farmer very kindly raked up the grass in rows which we then moved (all except one row) to the side of the field. In October the final row of hay was moved by loading it onto a tarpaulin attached to the back of the tractor.

Later that month we planted out wildflower plug plants, wild daffodil bulbs and snakes head fritillary bulbs. Also scattered some yellow rattle seed in a new area on the left-hand side of the path going up to the see saw area.

In September we purchased a selection of wildflower seed from Naturescape which we plan to grow on into plug plants.