

Progress of the Wild Flower Meadows in Coopers Field 2016

The estimated cost for funding the flower meadow project this year was £500. We were extremely grateful to The People's Postcode lottery for funding of £250 to help us with the project. With the continued support of Allington Parish Council and the anticipated sale of yellow rattle seed, the meadow project, now in its fourth year is beginning to flourish. We were also grateful for all those in the local community who grew on plug plants for us from supplied seed.

In February 2016 meadow mix seed was given to Magdalen Children's Project and Bridport Gardening Club to grow on in pots.

In March 2016 children made seed bombs with woodland flower mix and they then distributed them along the new hedge line in Coopers Field. A couple of days later the rest of the woodland flower mix seeds were sown on the edge of Coopers Wood where Jon Harvey had coppiced the willow and also sown along the top of the wood near the seats and around the seats. The remains of the meadow mix was scattered in the 3rd meadow.

Cathy and Chris are always a little anxious about how the flower meadows would do each year. The constant rain during the spring meant that even with the yellow rattle, the grass was growing vigorously crowding out the wild flowers. However, as the yellow rattle parasites the roots of grasses, it meant there was a bumper crop of seed. Thankfully this year we had a mainly dry warm sunny summer and it did not take long for the grasses to start to die back and the wildflowers to push through. There has been a huge increase in the amount of spring wildflowers in the meadow. The cowslips started to self-seed and we had wild daffodils and fritillaries flowering for the first time. It was good to see a quantity of ragged robin in the meadow and the orange hawkweed was showing in abundance.

Those plants such as poppy which prefer much drier conditions have failed to show. However, we knew that certain plants would thrive within the flower meadow and although the field is North facing it does receive a good amount of sun. It does also benefit from water runoff from the hill, meaning the soil is kept moist for longer. The plants that enjoy damp conditions such as the snakes head fritillary, cowslips and marsh orchids are thriving.

The meadow filled with wildlife with many sightings having been seen for the first time. Now that we have our own tractor to mow the grass, and we can mow more often, the meadows should flourish.

Collecting yellow rattle seed each year can be quite addictive as Cathy and Chris will vouch for!! Collecting this year's seed was easier than previous years as it was very prolific. Over 7 kilos of yellow rattle seed was collected from the meadows and this was sold to the Woodland Trust, Askers Meadow, Community Orchard and Emorsgate Seeds as well as a few local people who had their own private meadow. This raised over £900 and meant that the meadows were now self-funding.