

As the long shadows and glorious mellow light of September give way to October it reminds us that Autumn is upon us, and the Meadow Year is drawing to a close. If you don't have access to livestock, it is time to cut and remove the last growth from your meadow. This process mimics what sheep or cattle do as part of the farming year. Once the wildflower area you may have, or help to tend, is as short as possible, it is time to think about enhancement. That is to say plant seed, or plant plugs, of species that are not present in the Meadow to increase the diversity.

Remember this can be a couple of square meters in the garden, a roadside verge or Churchyard. Anywhere in fact that grass can be left to grow through the summer. This brings me to Battle and the initiative around the town to increase diversity on the roadside verges and The Roundabout. The Roundabout was planted back in the spring with species rich wildflower turf, and given the visual impact and positive feedback we have received, it has been a real success. The Roundabout is particularly poignant as it marks a dramatic day in the nation's history way back in 1066. Even more poignant, and perhaps not realised, it now marks another important historical fact. Every meadow back then would have been species rich. So this sculpture now sits in a perfect historical wildflower context, a small patch of recreated ancient meadow which is a haven for pollinators. Only 3% of our species rich grassland remains, the rest lost to modern agriculture, mostly in the last 70 years. This means that every little corner that can be planted with native wildflowers helps our pollinators. Not just bees, but fly's, wasps, moths; these are all pollinators and they are in big trouble with such a massive loss of habitat.

It's been a wonderful start this year to the wildflower project. Mayor David Furness launched the initiative in the spring, inspired by a talk given by Fergus Garrett of Great Dixter, a true meadow enthusiast and expert. David has gathered support and interest from many people, including the local school. The children's posters are around the town, and very beautiful they look. A loyal group of supporters are recording progress and turned out last Thursday to plant wildflower plugs. The plugs were donated by The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew at Wakehurst, 1000 of them! They are now all on a roadside verge at Calbec Hill. We also planted 5 kilos of Weald Native Origin Seed, donated by the High Weald Landscape Trust. (Thanks again volunteers) The Highways Agency, represented by James Newchurch, has been enthusiastic and cooperative. Verges in the scheme have been marked with a yellow flower topped pole, so look out for those. These verges are being cut late in the year to allow natural seeding and encourage diversity.

In mid summer I had the pleasure of walking round my own little meadow with our local MP Huw Merriman. He surprised me by not only owning up as a fervent meadow enthusiast and supporter, he is working to create his own meadow. This has multiple benefits for Huw as he is also a Beekeeper. I had not realised he chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on Bees. Obviously he supports the initiative, and it's good to have that kind of support regardless of any political persuasion.

So the Wildflower year is over.

Not wanting to remind everyone but as Game of Thrones would have it "Winter is Coming". However, so is Spring!! With the return of the wildflowers, I can't wait..
KD ~ Trustee of People Need Nature. www.peopleneednature.org.uk