



**INNSBROOK**  
Resort & Conference Center

## Tips on Wildflower Planting

### Site Selection

Sowing wildflower seeds without care and planning will only produce unsatisfactory results. Here are some questions that need to be considered when selecting a site; Does the site support plants now? If you have a site where nothing, including weeds, is growing, that site is unlikely to support wildflowers and will require a soil test. Will there be adequate moisture during germination and establishment? And is there available water to supplement inadequate moisture? What weed seeds are likely to be present in the soil? Will weeds spread to your site from adjacent areas? Assessment of these factors will enable you to make a realistic choice of a site where wildflowers will prosper and to decide what action will be necessary to ensure your success.

### Site Preparation

Proper site preparation is important for germination of seeds and healthy growth of seedlings. Best results will be obtained by planting on cleared ground. Remove existing vegetation to avoid competition from other plants, this may be done by spraying a herbicide, pulling, tilling under, or any combination of these methods. The method you choose will depend upon the size of the area and the type and density of vegetation. Loosen soil by scraping, tilling or scarifying. Tilling should be utilized only when soil is very compacted and further weed control measures can be taken.

When preparing a site that is very weedy you will want to use a two-phase approach. Start with the same methods mentioned above as phase one, phase two consist of irrigating the area to encourage more weed growth to allow you to spray when the newly sprouted weeds are young and most vulnerable. Allow vegetation to die, then rake out the dead debris. Sites that are dominated by weeds may require multiple sprayings. **Be sure to follow the manufactures recommendations when applying herbicides.**

### Seed Application

Your choice of application method will depend on the size of the area, the terrain, and seed size. On small areas, broadcast seeds evenly either by hand or by use of a drop or cyclone spreader. To achieve an even application of your seed use a material like clean, dry sand, the sand becomes the carrier agent and will allow for the even distribution of the seed. When using sand, a ratio of 1 or 2 parts sand to 1 part seed will give you the desired results. After you have broadcast your seed lightly rake the area to make sure the seed is covered to a maximum depth of 2-3 times the thickness of the seed. For large areas it is best to use a drag type device with a piece of chain link fence to mix the seed into the surface of the soil.

### Moisture

All seeds, including wildflowers, require minimum amounts of moisture to germinate and develop into healthy seedlings. Optimum results will be obtained by soaking the planted areas thoroughly and maintaining consistent moisture for 4-6 weeks, be careful not to over water, if puddling occurs you can wash the seed from your planting site. When planting in areas with no supplemental water available plant in February to March. Once seedlings are established, reduce watering unless you experience a period of drought conditions. A minimum of 1/2 inch of supplemental water per week may be required.

### Fertilization

Wildflowers may benefit from some fertilization when there is inadequate nutrients within the soil profile. There are wildflowers that tolerate poor soils, while others require a more fertile environment. The only way to know what nutrients are in the soil is through a soil test. This can be done by your local Extension Office. The soil results you receive will give recommendations on what to use to amend your soil fertility.

**Weed Control**

Weed control is the biggest problem facing plant establishment and one which has no easy solution. Weed seeds are present in the soil and lie dormant until the soil is disturbed. Some successful techniques to control weeds are; hand pulling, spot spraying with a general herbicide or selectively cutting weeds with a string trimmer. Be sure to remove all weed debris before they grow and produce seed heads.

**Planting Rates**

Each wildflower mixture has a recommended minimum and maximum planting rate. Minimum planting rates are based on 60-70 seeds per square foot (4 to 12 pounds per acre), which is usually sufficient to establish a good stand of wildflowers on prepared soil when adequate weed control can be maintained. Maximum planting rates are based on 120-140 seeds per square foot (8 to 24 pounds per acre), and are recommended when adequate soil preparation and weed control are not possible, or when maximum color is required.

**When to Plant**

The best time to plant depends on the climate and rainfall patterns as well as the species you are planting. In our area, plant annuals, perennials or mixtures of annuals and perennials in spring, early summer or late fall. Fall plantings should be late enough so that seeds do not germinate until spring. Perennials can also be sown in early fall provided that there are at least 10-12 weeks of growing time before the plants go dormant for the winter. Late fall plantings are advantageous when supplemental irrigation cannot be provided and adequate rainfall is anticipated in the spring.

**For more information, call the Innsbrook Director of Horticulture Keith Thompson at (636)928-3366 ext. 177 or email [keith.Thompson@innsbrook-resort.com](mailto:keith.Thompson@innsbrook-resort.com)**