



**Cheshire**  
Wildlife Trust



# Wildflowers

*A beginners guide to  
the wonderful world of wildflowers*



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In this guide, we'll be introducing you to some of the most beautiful wildflowers we have here in the UK. You'll also learn just how important they are for wildlife and for us.

We'll show you what to look out for, where to find them, as well as activities you can do at home to make whatever size space you have a little

*wilder!*



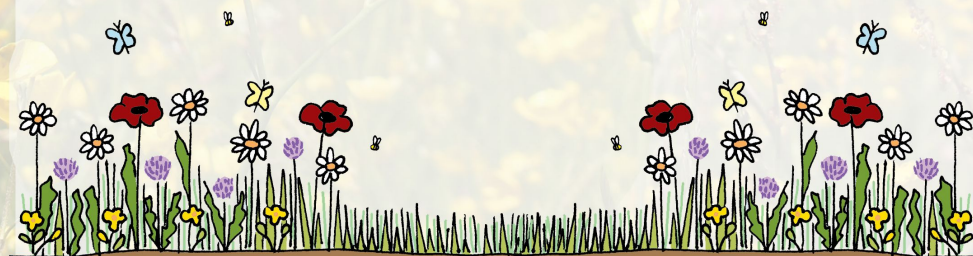
# Wonderful wildflowers

On warm sunny days, Britain's wildflower meadows hum with life. From the first flowers of spring, to misty autumn days when birds flock to berry-laden hedges. Colours, sounds and a floral perfume fill the senses. Our meadows are truly marvellous!

They provide important homes and food for wildlife. Insects thrive, birds feed and small animals find shelter.

However, it's not just meadows. Wildflowers grow in our gardens, towns, woodlands, hedgerows and road verges, if they are allowed.

Large or small, ledge or yard, your outdoor space can be a stepping stone in a wider network of wildlife havens. Let's link our urban greenspaces with nature reserves and the countryside, from Wirral to the Cheshire Peak District, from Tameside to Nantwich. Let your garden grow and bring wildlife back where you live work and play! As your local Wildlife Trust, we're here to show you how.



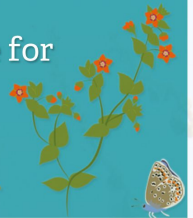


# Special places

Wildflowers provide important homes and food for pollinators such as bees, butterflies, moths and beetles.

We have these pollinators to thank for every third mouthful we eat! Not only do they pollinate our food crops, but they also support so many other plants and animals.

Let's bring wildlife back and create more space for wildflowers!



**Without pollinators we wouldn't have**



+

=



**These fruits**



**These vegetables**



**Many other foods**



# Great for wildlife

## Butterflies



Orange tip

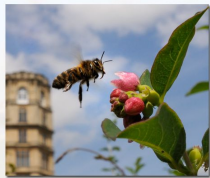


Common blue



Small copper

## Bees



Honey bee



White-tailed bumble bee



Carder bee

## Beetles & other insects



7-spot ladybird



Field grasshopper

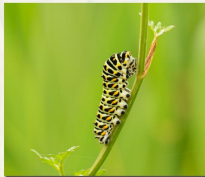


Dock leaf beetle

## Caterpillars and larvae



Cinnabar moth

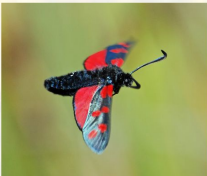


Swallowtail butterfly

## Moths

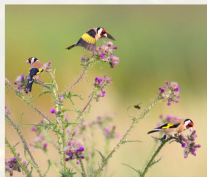


Elephant hawk moth



Six-spot burnet moth

## Birds



Goldfinch



Blue tit

Sadly wildflowers are increasingly rare to find. In Cheshire, we've lost 99% of our meadows in the last 60 years. Often, flowers in our gardens are non-native. They might put on a great show, but they perhaps don't offer much food or shelter for wildlife.



Read on to find out where to spot some of our gorgeous native wildflowers and what to look out for.

## Native plants

- Found naturally in the UK
- Around since the last ice age!
- UK wildlife has had time to adapt

### For example

Bees have a long straw-like tongue that helps them drink the nectar produced by flowers. Over 10,000 years, they have adapted so their tongues have become just the right length to reach into some of our native flowers and drink the nectar.

## Non-native plants

- Arrived in the last few centuries
- Not eaten by UK insects
- Can stop growth of native plants

### For example

Native bees will often find that their tongue isn't long enough to reach the nectar inside the non-native flower! Compared to 10,000 years of evolution, they simply haven't had time to adapt.





# Spring

Common wildflowers to look out for from spring onwards



**Name:** Germander speedwell

**Where it grows:** Grassland, woodland, hedgerows, farmlands, towns and gardens

**Size:** Up to 20cm

**What to look out for:**

- Spikes of bright blue flowers
- Four petals and a white middle
- Two rows of long white hairs on the stem
- Forms in large clumps

**Food for:** Brown plume moth

**Fun fact:** Considered a good luck charm for travellers to 'speed' you on your way!

**Name:** Cuckoo flower

**Where it grows:** Grassland, wetlands, freshwater, towns, and gardens

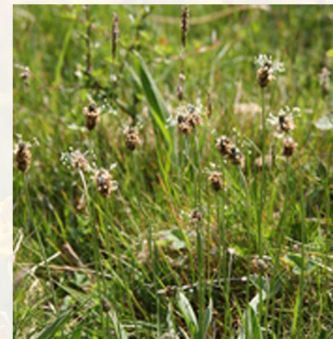
**Size:** Up to 50cm

**What to look out for:**

- Small and pink with four petals
- Round leaves at the base, narrow leaves along the stem

**Food for:** Orange tip butterflies

**Fun fact:** It's common name, 'Lady's smock' comes from the cupped shape of the flowers



**Name:** Ribwort plantain

**Where it grows:** Grassland, farmland, towns and gardens

**Size:** 20-50cm

**What to look out for:**

- Spear-shaped leaves in a circle around the base
- Long stems that end with a small flower head with white stamens

**Food for:** Various species of moth. It's seeds provide food for goldfinches

**Fun fact:** Historically used in a game similar to conkers by picking the stems and knocking the flower heads together.





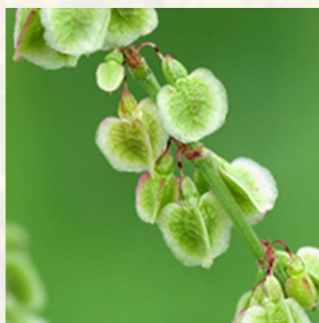
**Name:** Meadow buttercup  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, woodland, farmland, wetlands, towns and gardens  
**Size:** Up to 100cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Yellow flowers about 2cm across  
 - Five shiny petals  
 - Leaves divided in three to seven parts  
**Food for:** Various species of moth  
**Fun fact:** Poisonous to grazing animals

**Name:** Black medick  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, disturbed ground  
**Size:** 15-60cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Many small yellow oval flowers  
 - Low growing with a hairy stem  
 - Leaves grow in groups of three  
**Food for:** Common butterflies

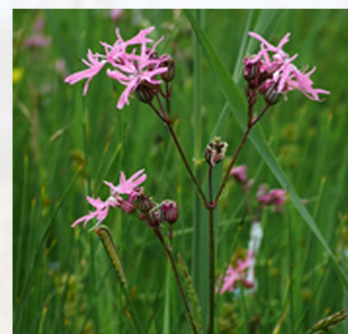


**Name:** Lesser trefoil  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, disturbed ground, dry ground  
**Size:** 30-80cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Yellow, clover-like flowers  
 - Curved, usually hairless stems  
 - Leaves grow in groups of three  
**Food for:** Common blue butterflies

**Name:** Common sorrel  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, woodland, heaths, moors, farmland, towns, and gardens  
**Size:** 30-80cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Arrow-shaped leaves growing from the base  
 - Reddish flowers carried on thin, upright spikes  
**Food for:** Small copper butterflies  
**Fun fact:** Traditionally, the juice was used to remove stains from linen



**Name:** Yellow rattle  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, farmland  
**Size:** up to 50cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Yellow tube-like flowers  
 - Flowers cased in a green pod  
 - Hairless stem with pairs of leaves  
**Food for:** Larvae of rare moths, including grass rivulet  
**Fun fact:** Often used to create wildflower meadows by feeding off vigorous grasses, allowing delicate species to grow



**Name:** Ragged robin  
**Where it grows:** Grassland woodland, wetlands, towns and gardens  
**Size:** Up to 75cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Divided pink flowers  
 - Each petal separated into four 'fingers'  
 - Narrow grass-like leaves  
**Food for:** Bumblebees and honeybees  
**Fun fact:** Loves moisture - ideal for extending a pond or waterlogged area to attract more wildlife!

**Name:** Bugle  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, woodland, hedgerow, heathland, moorland, towns and gardens  
**Size:** 20-30cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Small, purple flowers  
 - Short & straight with large oval leaves  
 - Small pairs of leaves up the spike  
**Food for:** Variety of insects, including white-tailed bumblebee, green-veined white butterfly, silvery moth and common carder bees.





# Summer

Common wildflowers to look out for from summer onwards



**Name:** Meadowsweet

**Where it grows:** Grassland, woodland, hedgerow, coastal, wetlands, heathland and moorland

**Size:** Up to 125cm

**What to look out for:**

- A 'froth' of creamy-white flowers
- Dark green leaves divided into pairs
- Leaves have silvery undersides

**Food for:** The larvae of mottled beauty moth

**Fun fact:** The flowers are sometimes used in wine, beer or to give jams an almond flavour!



**Name:** Cat's ear

**Where it grows:** Grassland, disturbed ground

**Size:** 20-60cm

**What to look out for:**

- Yellow flowers with dark-tipped leaves
- Leaves have small hairs
- Looks like other dandelions, but with more rounded leaves, forming a circle

**Name:** Black knapweed

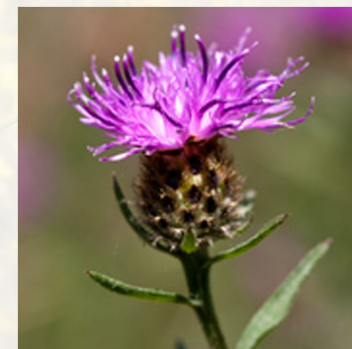
**Where it grows:** Grassland, woodland, towns, coastal, gardens, heaths and moors

**Size:** up to 100cm

**What to look out for:**

- Bright pink-purple thistle-like flowers
- Tall plant with long, stalkless leaves
- Made up of lots of small 'florets' of flowers

**Food for:** Various species of butterfly

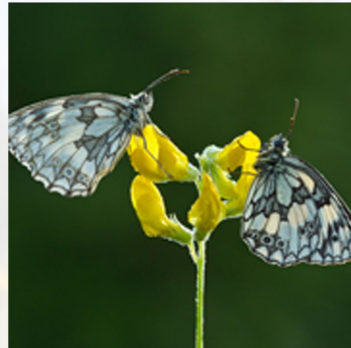






**Name:** Common birds-foot trefoil  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, coastal, rocky habitats, towns, gardens, farmland, heath and moors  
**Size:** Up to 35cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Yellow flowers that look like little slippers  
 - Flowers sometimes tinted orange / red  
 - Purple tinged seed pods  
 - Leaves grow in groups of five  
**Food for:** caterpillars of the common blue, silver studded blue and wood white butterfly, bees and the six-spot burnet moth  
**Fun fact:** A member of the pea family!

**Name:** Meadow vetchling  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, hedgerows, towns, gardens, heath, moors, woodlands and wetlands  
**Size:** Up to 120cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Flower head made up of a group of pea-like flowers  
 - Shiny, black seed pods  
 - Long angled stems  
**Food for:** Bees and wasps  
**Fun fact:** Also known as 'Meadow Pea'!



**Name:** Selfheal  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, hedgerow, towns, gardens and farmland  
**Size:** 20-30cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Purple flowers in dense clusters  
 - Low-growing with dark-green oval leaves  
**Food for:** Bees and wasps  
**Fun fact:** Traditionally used in medicine, from stopping bleeding to treating heart disease and sore throats!



**Name:** Oxeye daisy  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, coastal, farmland, towns and gardens  
**Size:** Up to 60cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Large white, round flower head on a single, tall stem  
 - Spoon-shaped leaves at the base  
 - Jagged leaves along the stem  
**Fun fact:** Sometimes called 'Moon daisy' because they are so bright that they appear to 'glow' in the evening during summertime

**Name:** Lady's bedstraw  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, coastal, farmland, towns and gardens, heath and moorland  
**Size:** Up to 30cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Small, narrow leaves that spiral round the stem  
 - Dense clusters of tiny, yellow flowers  
**Food for:** Elephant hawk moth  
**Fun fact:** Historically used to curdle milk in the process of cheese-making!



**Name:** Tufted vetch  
**Where it grows:** Grassland, hedgerow, wetlands, woodland, towns and gardens, farmland, freshwater, heaths and moors.  
**Size:** over 80cm  
**What to look out for:**  
 - Spike of densely packed purple flowers  
 - Up to 40 flowers on one side  
 - Leaves in pairs on opposite sides  
**Food for:** Bumblebees  
**Fun fact:** The seedpods look like very small peapods and turn black when ripe!



# Activities

## Make a meadow pot



1. Get a plant pot, bucket or container and drill several small holes into the bottom.
2. Add some stones, rocks or broken pots to the bottom to allow your pot to drain.
3. Fill it with peat-free compost.
4. Start planting (either sow from seed or plant ready grown)  
*Suggestions:*  
*Cool blues: Cornflower, wild pansy*  
*Hot reds: Poppy, corncockle, pheasant's eye*  
*Soft yellows: Corn marigold, corn buttercup*
5. Water frequently in summer.
6. Gather any seeds at the end of the year and store in a cool, dry place.
7. Sow each year.





# Make a wild basket



1. Choose a container. You can use anything you like for planting. Try an old watering can, kettle or teapot, holey boots and buckets, paint tins, catering tins, pans and colanders or veg racks.
2. Rest the basket or container on a bucket or large pot for stability.
3. Line with an old woolly jumper cut to size, or choose a solid basket.
4. Fill with peat-free compost.
5. Put in a tall, central plant  
Suggestions: *Knapweed, scabious, lavender*
6. Surround with smaller plants.  
Suggestions:  
Cool blues: *Lobelia, wild pansy, nepeta*  
Neutral whites: *Sweet alyssum, erigeron, ox-eye daisy*  
Herb smellies/eatables: *Verbena, patio tomatoes, chives, thyme, rosemary, parsley, sage, wild strawberry*
7. Continue building up plants & compost until about 5 cm from the top.
8. Feed once a week and water frequently in summer.



# Let it grow



## Leave your garden wild

Take a day off today and do nothing! Leave a wild spot in your garden by not mowing the lawn, or not weeding the paving – nature will love it!

[www.wildlifewatch.org.uk](http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk)

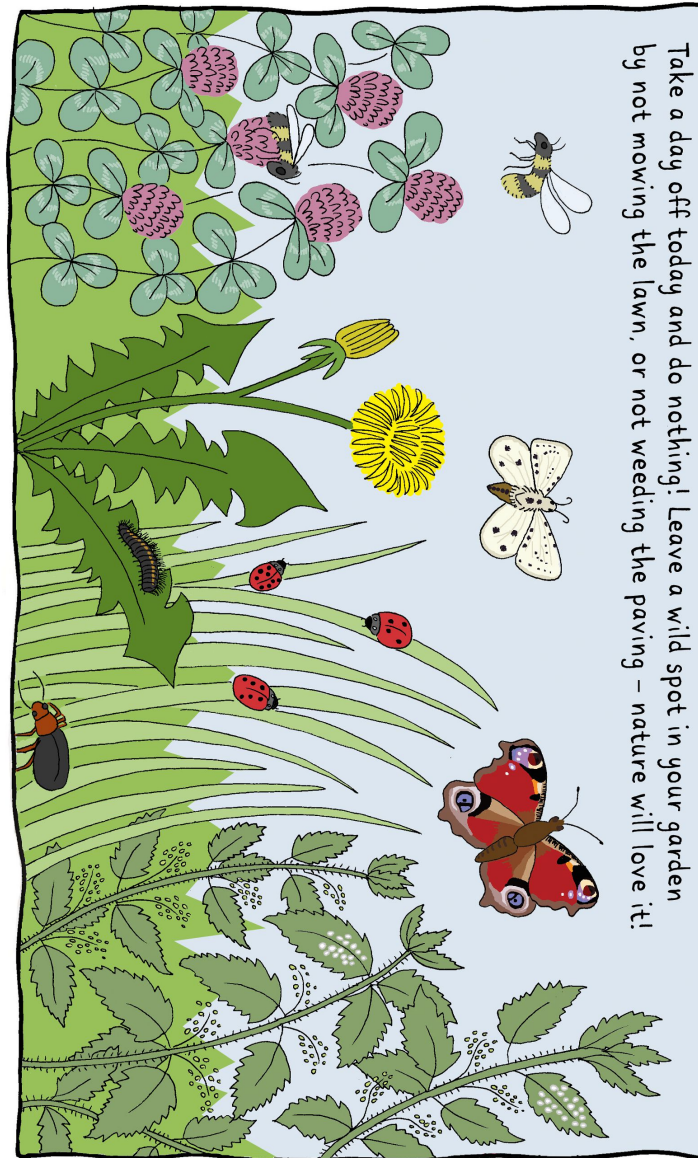


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wildlife  
watch





# Create a meadow

## Grow your own mini garden meadow

wildlife  
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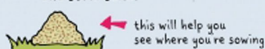
### You will need:

- Spare patch of the garden  
an area that hasn't had fertiliser or compost added
- Packet of meadow flower seeds
- Grass seed
- Handful of sand
- Rake
- Shears
- Twiggy branches

- 1 Remove grass, weeds and the top layer of soil, then lightly rake.



- 2 Mix together 1 part wildflower seed with 4 parts grass seed and some sand.



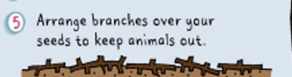
- 3 Sprinkle your seed mix in spring or autumn.



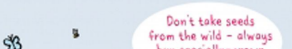
5g of seed per metre<sup>2</sup> of soil



- 4 Walk over the soil and water lightly.



- 5 Arrange branches over your seeds to keep animals out.



- 6 Cut in summer to 5-10cm high and compost the cuttings.



Cornfield annuals will flower in the first year. Perennial meadows often need two years.

Don't take seeds from the wild - always buy specially-grown seeds.

## How to make seed bombs

### You will need:

- Meadow flower seeds or seeds collected from the garden
- Peat-free compost
- Water
- Powdered clay (from craft shops - use clay soil if you can't find any)
- Mixing bowl

- 1 In a bowl, mix together 1 cup of seeds with 5 cups of compost and 2-3 cups of clay powder.



- 2 Slowly mix in water with your hands until everything sticks together, then roll mixture into firm balls.



- 3



- 4 Now for the fun bit - plant by throwing your seed bombs at bare parts of the garden!



# How to stay wild



Every day Cheshire Wildlife Trust are working to bring wildlife back by creating spaces for it to thrive. On our website you'll find lots of tips and advice about how to support local wildlife and create a wildlife-friendly garden or outdoor space.

We are your region's leading conservation charity, fighting to bring wildlife back across Cheshire, Halton, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Warrington and Wirral. We protect more than 30 nature reserves on your doorstep ranging from wildflower meadows to coastal dunes to ancient woodlands - beautiful wild spaces.

Our pages on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are brilliant online communities to share photos, tips and ideas.

If you've seen some wildflowers or have done one of our activities, tag us in your photos - we'd love to see!

You can also sign up to our e-newsletter to have a weekly dose of nature direct to your inbox!

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