

Hay Meadow Management



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Hay meadows are grasslands that are left to grow over the spring and summer and are cut for hay. Hay meadow management involves the process of leaving flowers to set seed before cutting, then to be aftermath grazed; a process which offers several advantages. These are methods used in large scale hay meadows, but anyone with a garden or access to a green space can create an equally advantageous hay meadow rich in flora and fauna.

Traditional Hay Meadow Management



Aftermath grazing is when livestock is used to graze the meadow after it has been cut. This method helps tread seed into the ground and allows wildflowers to germinate.

Leaving edges of your meadow uncut provides insects with food sources and shelter.

Yellow rattle is an excellent plant that manages the growth of grasses.

Never plough your hay meadow! Ploughing will destroy the species rich soil composition that develops over the years.

Environmental Benefits

✓ **They store carbon!** The roots of the grasses and wildflowers help to draw down atmospheric carbon through the process of photosynthesis where it is then stored in the soil.

✓ If the meadows are managed well and are not ploughed, the **carbon remains locked up in the soil**, being a huge benefit against climate change.

✓ The use of livestock form part of the nutrient cycle, what goes in must come out - poo! At low densities, this is beneficial by adding more organic matter into the soil, which then **increases the capacity of the soil to store more carbon!**

✓ **Hay meadows provide crucial habitats** for not only dung dependent invertebrates, but also for important pollinators like butterflies and bees.

Make Your Own Lawn Meadow

You can achieve great results at home using the following method:

