



## Annual flower bed

A lot of people have told me how much they are enjoying (it's July 3rd 2022) the annual flower bed planted on the front of Westminster Drive, so I thought I'd write a step by step guide and hopefully inspire a few people for 2023. First off, thank you to Elly, Huw and Ieuan for trusting me and for carting away some of the debris.

## The Bed - Before



March 2022

The seed mix I chose ([Carnival mix from Meadow in my Garden](#)), probably any seed mix, would have struggled to germinate when competing with the grasses. I've also never liked bergenia's<sup>1</sup> or the "municipal planting" left behind by Wilson's (except the euonymus). Drastic action was required.

---

<sup>1</sup> It's an irrational thing from childhood, made worse by the fact that Wilson's originally planted a really nice holly bush there, before changing their minds and substituting the elephant's ears



## The bed - Sowing



I took away most of the turf, which was several day's work all told, leaving only a 15cm (ish) border between the bed, the pavement, and the drive. I filled the depression left by the removal of the turf with garden compost and leafmould, and sowed the seed mix directly onto this. Then I firmed it in with my feet. I know it looked odd, but that was what I was doing. The pink bordered area is where I sowed the Carnival mix. The other coloured areas were other annual, wildflower mixes that were bought the following weekend from a "local garden centre." These subsequent sowings were much less successful. Maybe, it was because the seed was sown onto bare clay soil rather than the compost/leafmould mix.



The posts, string and coloured tape was to remind dog owners that this bit of ground is actually someone's garden. My attempt at "nudge theory."

## Germination



May

A few flowers starting to appear and the string and tape seem to be working. At this point someone (the mother of a friend from school) told me that I need to do some weeding. I did not do any weeding. We did water a couple of times during dry spells.



## Flowering



It's mid-july as I write this and I've just had to water again. I was hoping it wouldn't need it, but it has been so dry.



It's now the end of July, after the big heat wave and things are looking pretty parched. I don't think there was much I could have done to mitigate against that. Gardening.

## Mistakes

Seed distribution clearly doesn't appear to have been even. All of the poppies are at the driveway end and you can see a lot of soil at the end nearest to the corner. I think I had enough seeds for the area, but I was too generous at the start.

The wildflower mixes from the "local garden centre" have germinated poorly or not at all. I don't know if that's because the seeds themselves weren't in the best condition or, as they were an afterthought, I hadn't prepared the ground as diligently. I don't have the packets, but I'm sure we selected "plant in Spring for flowers in Summer."

## Wildflowers

The mix aren't all, or even predominantly, wildflowers, I chose it to be showy, because the people at Meadow in my Garden said it would be robust, and because I was starting in March. In order to make wildflowers work properly I think I'd have had to start work much earlier and work much diligently on changing the conditions. Before I started the grass had been untended for several years and wildflowers and no wildflowers had spontaneously appeared in the sward.

Perennial wildflowers can be bought as plug-plants and introduced into a lawn. I may look into this for our own front lawn (where the croci flower). I tried a wild flower seed mix last autumn and all that came up were some sweet peas.

## Conclusion

I am delighted with the results. The flowers are great and there's loads of insects buzzing about. Last week, a goldfinch flew up out of the bed as I approached, so perhaps the seed heads are going to be useful again.

Lots of people have been very complimentary. I am really glad it has brought so much cheer. You can do the same.

## Planting your own flower bed

1. Work out where you want it to go.
2. Look at the conditions. Does it get full sunlight for most of the day? Is there a lawn there already? Shrubs?
3. Choose a seed mix as soon as possible. Planting time will determine when you need to get the bed ready. If you want to try for wildflowers then you will want to read further about soil preparation and ongoing management. It's not rocket science, but it's not as easy as the process I followed above. There are loads of free resources on the internet. I think it's safe to say we're on clay soil in Upper Saxondale, so if you want to grow a chalk downland meadow, you will have a lot of prep work.
4. Make sure the bed is ready for sowing in time for sowing