

# WILDFLOWERS

*Welcoming wildflowers back into our cities is one way of restoring health to outdoor spaces. "Wildflowers" can include plants native to our area, as well as relative newcomers which grow well here with minimal care. When selecting wild plants for your garden, avoid any which are potentially damaging to natural areas. (See [Invasive Plants](#)) Many wild plants are not only beautiful, they are important threads in the fabric of life in our region. Some of our most beautiful birds and butterflies, for example, depend on wild plants for their survival.*

## **Wildflower Gardens**

Wild flowering plants can be integrated into a new or existing flowerbed, or planted into a larger meadow area. For small area planting using purchased plants, you first need to prepare the area for planting to minimize competition from other seeds that may be in the ground, so spade and turn the area several times over, perhaps over a week or two. Use a garden fork in the area as well if you have one. Insert the plants into a hole that has had some standing water put in (Letting plant water stand for a few hours before using lets the chlorine escape as a gas and isn't ice cold - rain barrel water is ideal.). They will need watering during dry spells during their first season. Keep an eye on them to remove any weeds or competing plants from their needed growing space.

For intensive wildflower planting, or for starting from seed, the process is a bit more complex, but the results are rewarding!



Adequate site preparation is essential. To reduce competition from other plants, existing vegetation can be removed in several ways. The planting area can be cultivated by rototilling or removing sod and spading. This may require repeated cultivation over several months to destroy newly sprouting seeds in the soil. A less labour-intensive method, but one that requires a longer period of time, is to mulch

the growing area for several months during the growing season. Mulching is covering the soil to block out all sunlight. A large sheet of black plastic or a thick layer of leaves or straw underlain with several sheets of newspaper or cardboard will do the trick. The mulch must be in place for an entire growing season (May to October) to thoroughly clear the area of established plants. Once the area is prepared, you can plant seeds or plants of the species you have selected for your garden. Plants, while more expensive, can give you a head start over competing weed seeds still present in the soil. As with any garden, wildflowers will need some weeding and watering, especially in the first year as the plants are becoming established.

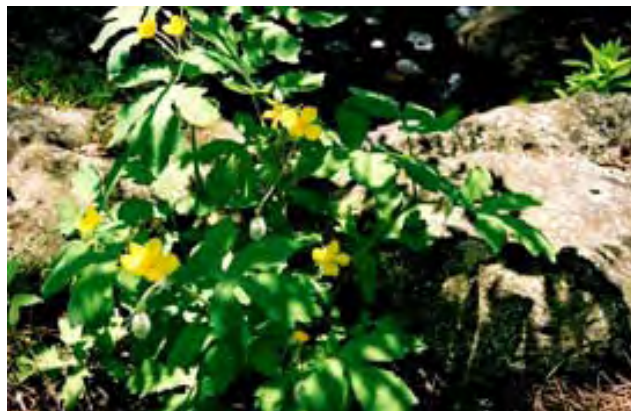
### **Wildflower Sources**

Many garden centres and markets are now carrying wildflowers. Make sure to buy plants that have been propagated in a nursery and not dug from the wild. Wildflowers can also be found at the annual plant sales at the Guelph Arboretum (519-824-4120, ext.52113) and the Royal Botanical Gardens (905-527-1158 Toll free: 1-800-694-4769).

Try collecting your own seed from local natural areas. Seed is usually ripe 6–8 weeks after the flower has bloomed. Remember that care and respect are important when working in natural areas. Be sure to get the permission of the property owner and never take more than 10% of the seed you find; leave the rest to grow or provide food for wildlife. Don't ever dig up sensitive natural areas for plant material!

### **Choosing the Right Plants**

It is important to survey your yard conditions before choosing suitable wildflowers. Some plants need shade or sun, moist or dry conditions. Knowing what your plants need and what your land can provide is the first step towards successful wildflower gardening. The following plants are excellent choices for the Stratford area. They are showy, hardy, and suitable for our climate. Find the list that best matches your site conditions.



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**SUN** - Some of the most colourful wildflowers need at least six hours of sun daily to thrive.

Common Name	Botanical Name	Native	Colour	Period
White Beardtongue	<i>Penstemon digitalis</i>	yes	white	June
Ox-eye Daisy	<i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>	no	white	June
Muskmallow	<i>Malva moscheta</i>	no	white/pink	June
Blanketflower	<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>	yes	yellow/orange	June
False Sunflower	<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	yes	yellow	July
Beebalm	<i>Monarda didyma</i>	yes	red/purple	July
Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis grandiflora</i>	yes	yellow	July
Butterfly Milkweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	yes	orange	July
Blackeyed Susan	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	yes	orange	July
Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	yes	pink/purple	Aug
Grey-headed Coneflower	<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	yes	yellow	Aug
New England Aster	<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	yes	purple	Sept



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**SHADE** – Many of our woodland wildflowers bloom in early spring, before the leaves unfold on deciduous trees. They need soil enriched with plenty of humus and/or compost.

Common Name	Botanical Name	Native	Colour	Period
Anemone	Anemone canadensis	yes	white	June
Bloodroot	Sanguinaria canadensis	yes	white	April
White Trillium	Trillium grandiflorum	yes	white	May
Foamflower	Tiarella cordifolia	yes	white	May
Large-flowered Bellwort	Uvularia grandiflora	yes	yellow	May
Jack in the Pulpit	Arisaema atrorubens	yes	green/purple	June
Jacob's Ladder	Polemonium caeruleum	no	blue	June
Wild Columbine	Aquilegia canadensis	yes	yellow/orange	June
Zig-zag Goldenrod	Solidago flexicaulis	yes	yellow	Sept
White Snakeroot	Eupatorium rugosum	yes	white	Sept

**WETLAND** – These plants tolerate spring flooding and soggy conditions. They will also tolerate drier conditions later in the summer. (Joe-Pye Weed, Swamp Milkweed, and Helen's Flower will also manage in normal garden conditions.)

Common Name	Botanical Name	Native	Colour	Period
Marsh Marigold	Caltha palustris	yes	yellow	May
Blue Iris	Iris versicolor	yes	blue	June/July
Swamp Milkweed	Asclepias incarnata	yes	pink	July
Cardinal Flower	Lobelia cardinalis	yes	red	July
Great Blue Lobelia	Lobelia siphilitica	yes	blue	Aug
Culver's Root	Veronicastrum virginicum	yes	white	Aug
Joe-Pye Weed	Eupatorium maculatum	no	pink	Sept
Helen's Flower	Helenium autumnale	yes	yellow/red	Sept

See [Gardening for Wildlife](#) and [Native Plants](#)

Wildflower Books are available at the Stratford Public Library!  
19 St. Andrew Street (519-271-0220) ([www.stratford.library.on.ca](http://www.stratford.library.on.ca))

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