



# Horsham Trafalgar Neighbourhood Mini-Meadows



**The Trafalgar Mini-Meadows Project** aims to uplift all our lives and support us to take action to help our local wildlife.

The project is an initiative agreed by Horsham Trafalgar Neighbourhood Council to encourage residents to support wildlife and biodiversity in the Trafalgar neighbourhood. It's aligned with Horsham Green Spaces' Get Horsham Buzzing Project and Horsham District's Wilder Horsham Initiative.

Extreme weather events are now affecting us all right here with floods, fire, damage to roads and extreme heat last year, and the extinction of native species is posing an unprecedented threat to humanity and the natural world. The UK was thronging with nature only 30 years ago but is now one of the most wildlife-depleted countries in the world, but the importance of enjoying nature, open spaces and the countryside is increasingly being recognised.

Lots of common insect-eaters such as the Swallow, Skylark, Cuckoo, Swift and Nightingale are now scarce and the UK's bees and butterfly species which we need to pollinate our food, are in dramatic decline.

**What can we do to make a difference?** Acting alone, we can't reverse wildlife loss or halt climate change, but we can take steps to protect our local wildlife and mitigate the effects improving, restoring and increasing habitats for wildlife.

Horsham Trafalgar Neighbourhood Council has already started action to reverse these losses by planting of crab apple trees and native spring bulbs, and we have plans for many more community wildlife and biodiversity activities in the near future. The details will be posted on the Trafalgar Neighbourhood Council's website <https://horshamtrafalgarnc.com> and Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/HorshamTrafalgarNC>. So do follow us to find out what exciting actions are planned.

**What we really need now is your help and participation to make the dream come true!**

We'd like to invite you to participate in our **One Square Metre Mini-Meadow** challenge by creating your very own miniature wildflower meadow in your garden or greenspace!

**Why mini wildflower meadows?** Wildflower meadows are a species-rich grassland habitat that support a huge range of wildlife including plants, bees, flies, beetles, spiders, moths, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, bats and birds. As opposed to chemically-treated monoculture fields, meadows also provide other environmental benefits including carbon storage, water retention to prevent flooding or drought, good bacteria to bring the soil back to life and habitat for crop pollinators.

Wildflower meadows could once be found throughout the UK. Today only 3% of the meadows that existed in the 1930's remain. Nearly 7.5 million acres of wildflower meadow have been lost and they are still being destroyed. Here in Trafalgar we doubt whether there are any areas of old wildflower meadows left.

So let's start to reverse this loss. Your free pack of wildflower seeds is enclosed and over the page to help get you started, are some instructions on how to prepare a patch of ground and sow your seeds!

Together we can make a difference!

**Stop Press** - see our website for details of our upcoming Swift survey and our call for volunteers. **-Stop Press**

## How to create your own Mini-Meadow

We are providing **free** 4g packs of seed (enclosed) so you can create your own mini-wildflower meadow in your garden. Each pack will be enough to create a One Square Metre Mini-Meadow.

Among the species included in each pack are Greater Knapweed, Wild Carrot, Lady's Bedstraw, Hedge Bedstraw, St. John's Wort, Cat's Ear, Field Scabious, Ox-Eye Daisy, Devil's Bit Scabious, Rough Hawkbit, Common Toadflax, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Ragged Robin, Cowslip, Selfheal, Yellow Rattle, Common Sorrel and Salad Burnet, plus various wild grasses. There are also some cornfield annual species to provide a cover crop and a 'pop' of early colour whilst perennial species become established.

**Getting Mini-Meadow ready!** We hope you will sow your own mini-meadow! Here's how to prepare the ground prior to sowing:

The first thing to do is **select a sunny spot to attract the bees, butterflies and other sun-loving insects.**

Don't worry if you have poor soil - in fact, the worse it is, the better the meadow will be!

**Mark an area equivalent to one square metre (1m<sup>2</sup>)** using sticks and string. If you prefer to have a circular meadow, or even an irregular shape, that is fine. To mark out a circular meadow, use a peg and a piece of string 56cm (or 22ins) long.

Next, **strip off any turf and other plants** (stack the turf upside down in a shady spot to create another area of habitat!). If there are any unwanted perennials such as brambles or thistles, dig these out.

If your soil is quite rich, and assuming you have enough energy, you could consider turning it over to bring the poorer sub-soil to the surface and bury the fertile top soil. **Do not apply fertiliser or soil conditioners! Rake to break up lumps and create a fine tilth** ready for seed-sowing.

If all this sounds **too much like hard work**, you can just **scratch out some of the grass** and other vegetation to expose (ideally) up to 50% bare soil to sow into, using a wire grass rake vigorously.

Either way the ground for your mini-meadow is now ready for you to sow your free seed!

The seed we have carefully chosen for you is perfect for heavy clay soil - the stuff we have here in Trafalgar!

**Sow by the end of March or early April** if possible. Choose a dry day with no wind. It is best not to sow if your soil is very wet, though our soil starts to dry out from mid-February in most years!

**It is important to SOW THE SEED VERY THINLY.** A 4gm pack might not seem very much but it is ample for a One Square Metre mini-meadow. To get an even spread, it can be helpful to mix the seed with a little dry sand before sprinkling it over.

**Do not cover the seed as it needs sunlight** to germinate. Just firm it in gently to get good contact between the seed and the soil. If no rain is forecast, gently water, but take care not to wash the seed away.

**Watch the soil doesn't dry out** and water as necessary.

Now all you need to do is to wait for your seed to germinate and your meadow to grow!

**At the end of the summer or in early autumn cut down the long stems** with shears or a strimmer, and carefully **rake off or remove the cuttings** to stop the soil changing. You can pop the debris into your brown top bin. If you have the energy, it can be helpful to give your mini meadow a good rake after cutting to remove moss etc and to **expose some bare soil again so that any newly fallen wildflower seeds can germinate.** This will make your meadow better and better each summer!

**Good luck and happy sowing!**

**Thank you for helping local species and for being a caring, cooling community!**