

“I want to seed a wildflower meadow”

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Creating a wildflower meadow is a worthy project! You are not alone. More and more San Juan County residents are thinking along these lines.

You may already have done some general research. If not, take a look at this good, general how-to guide written by the Xerces Society: xerces.org/publications/guidelines/establishing-pollinator-meadows-from-seed.

The websites for Northwest Meadowscares (northwestmeadowscares.com) and Satinflower Nurseries (satinflower.ca) also offer great advice for sowing native seed in our region.

As noted in these guides, the importance of preparing your site to reduce weeds and seeds cannot be overemphasized. Native seed is much costlier and less vigorous than bags of grass seed from the hardware store, and you'll want to give it the best possible chance of success. One common local approach for preparing small sites is to cover the area to be seeded with black landscape fabric to smother existing vegetation, which can also kill seeds on the soil surface with heat. (Note: in summer 2021, the Land Bank did just this to a patch of lawn at the main office at 328 Caines St. in Friday Harbor. Current plans are to seed and plant the site in fall 2022 – feel free to stop by to watch our progress!)

You might want to connect with others for advice and information sharing. Take a look at the Camas Club website (camas.club), which is maintained by a group of islanders united by a desire to create native habitat.

Finding seed that's right for your site can take a little time. Here in the San Juans, choosing deer-resistant species is important unless your site is fenced, or you live on an island without deer. Species native to the islands or the greater Pacific Northwest region will undoubtedly provide the best habitat for our local insects, birds, and other species. But it can be hard to find a mix of local or even regional plants. Northwest Meadowscares sells mixes formulated for the greater Pacific Northwest region. If you want to be more choosy and hands-on, you can piece one together yourself from various nursery sources: in addition to [Northwest Meadowscares](https://northwestmeadowscares.com) and [Satinflower Nurseries](https://satinflower.ca), the Salish Seeds Project (sjclandbank.org/the-salish-seeds-project-bringing-back-island-wildflowers), Pacific Rim Institute (pacificriminstitute.org/welcome.html), and the Center for Natural Lands Management Nursery (cnlm.org/native-seed-nursery) sell bulk seeds of individual species that are native to the northern Puget Sound region.

Finally, it's wise to experiment with a small patch before tackling a large area. Every site is different, and you'll learn a lot from a year or more of experimentation, perfecting your “recipe” for meadow creation.