



MEADOWSCAPING WITH KIDS

Meadowscaping is an innovative approach to our cultivated landscapes that invites us to bring nature “home.” It weaves nature back into developed land where it rightfully belongs. With a bit of knowledge and creative thinking, we can transform lawns, playgrounds, empty lots, unused paved spaces, and patios into havens for plants and animals. Research shows that spending time in nature helps both kids and adults thrive. When we look to meadows as inspiration for our landscapes, the benefits for our kids, our communities, and our world are boundless.

What is a Meadow?

Bursting with life, meadows are filled with flowers and native plants that allow biodiversity to flourish by naturally attracting an abundance of butterflies, birds, and other wildlife. Though they may include a few scattered trees and shrubs, meadows abound with non-woody plants. Meadows exist naturally across a variety of climates, and they can be cultivated anywhere.

What is Meadowscaping?

Taking cues from natural meadows, meadowscaping offers a new vision for our cultivated landscapes. It invites the creative use of plants to create havens for pollinators and other wildlife. From patio containers to mini-meadows to large-scale plantings, meadowscaping transforms yards of all sizes into natural oases.



Why Meadowscape?

The benefits of meadowscaping are boundless! By bringing nature home to our yards and neighborhoods, meadows become transformative on many levels. The benefits start with us and then radiate out to our communities and to the planet. When we meadowscape, we:

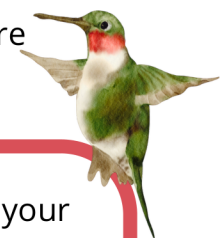
- Connect to a sense of purpose and to the land, traditions, and people around us.
- Cultivate feelings of pride, confidence, hope, and joy.
- Encourage physical activity and support quality family time.
- Foster positive interactions, nurture friendships and inspire random acts of kindness.
- Turn nearby spaces into celebrations of sustainability and biodiversity.
- Provide opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in our community.
- Increase ecological biodiversity and create a home for wildlife.
- Nurture soil health, support water conservation, control erosion, and help manage stormwater.
- Help mitigate climate change by sequestering atmospheric carbon in plants and soil.

When we plant and nurture meadows, we become a force for good and contribute to the well-being of ourselves, our communities, and the planet. Let's dig in!



WAYS TO ENGAGE KIDS IN YOUR MEADOW ADVENTURE

Meadowscaping is an ongoing adventure, not a one-time activity! To get the most from your meadow, engage kids throughout the process, from imagining and planning, to planting and maintaining, to celebrating and enjoying year-round. Here are some of the many ways to get kids excited about meadows!



- **Let them help design it.** Have kids take part in deciding where you'll create your meadow. Ask older kids to research native meadow plants and learn how to identify common native and naturalized plants in your area and list some recommended plants. For young kids, collect photos of possible plants and invite them to choose a few.
- **Design spaces for reflection, observation, and creative endeavors.** Include sitting areas so kids can watch pollinators and other wildlife and record their observations. Create a maze by cutting paths so kids can explore the meadow without trampling plants.
- **Embrace the cycle of life.** Start plants from seed. Watch seedlings produce stems and leaves. Celebrate as different plants bloom and then, as flowers fade, watch as fruits, pods, and seeds develop. Research how to save different types of seeds for replanting or sharing with friends and neighbors. Make seed balls and seed paper for fun homemade gifts.
- **Get crafty!** Collect fresh blooms and arrange them in artful bouquets. Press flowers for notecards and wall art. Dry flowers for year-round enjoyment. Remind kids to leave plenty of flowers, as they provide food for pollinators and make the seeds for future plants.
- **Follow the seasonal changes.** Meadows are fascinating year-round. Spring and summer bring bursts of colorful blooms. In late summer and fall, fascinating seedheads, fruits, and seeds develop. Winter brings a muted color palette and the whisper of dried foliage rustling in the breeze. Hone kids' observation skills with seasonal scavenger hunts. Invite them to draw and write about the changes that occur through the seasons. At the end of the year, turn their observations into a calendar!



STEPS TO SUCCESS



Although meadows need less frequent watering and fewer maintenance chores compared to lawns, they do require some forethought, preparation, and care. Keep the following in mind when planning your meadow:

Consider size and locale of planting.

Many yards in suburban and rural areas have the space to support a variety of meadow plantings, from containers on the patio to broad expanses of blooms. A natural place to start your meadow is to replace the grass around the perimeter of your lawn; this allows you to maintain a yard space for lawn chairs and badminton games. You'll be surrounding yourself with nature — and reducing the amount of high-maintenance lawn that offers few benefits to wildlife.

With a bit of creativity, you can create meadow plantings in urban areas too! If in-ground beds aren't possible, you can grow plants in containers and raised beds. Or perhaps there are community spaces like easements, roadsides, and curb strips where hardy plants with low water needs will brighten everyone's day. And don't forget to look up! Rooftop gardens are sprouting across the globe.

Match plants to environmental conditions.

Consider the light conditions and soil type at your meadow site and choose plants accordingly. Most meadow plants prefer full sun (8+ hours of sunlight) to part sun (4-8 hours of sunlight). Some plants thrive in sandy soil that drains quickly after a rainstorm, while others prefer consistently moist soils. If soil remains soggy after rain, take extra care when choosing plants, as many plants won't tolerate "wet feet."

Native plants are often a good option; they are adapted to your climate and provide food and shelter for native pollinators. Non-native plants can also be good choices; take care to avoid plants deemed invasive in your region. Your meadow plants can be started from seed, planted as bulbs, or purchased as transplants.

Diversity of size, growth habit, and bloom times.

Take your cues from nature when choosing plants! Natural meadows contain a variety of plant species with staggered bloom times to provide year-round sources of food and habitat for wildlife. The plants have complementary growth habits both above and below ground to avoid competing for resources. For example, plants with deep roots may be interspersed with shallow-rooted plants so they can obtain water from different layers of the soil. Perennial plants die back over the winter, but their living roots stabilize the soil. Large plants provide shade and keep the soil cool for smaller neighboring plants.

Diverse plantings also provide endless opportunities for observation and enjoyment. They provide bouquets from spring to fall, flowers at the ready for pressing and other crafts, and seeds for saving and seed balls. They cheer passersby with their ever-changing displays and nurture community connections. And they provide food and shelter for the many birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife that call our planet home.