





Connecting kids to the land around them is an essential responsibility and of critical importance in cultivating the next generation of earth stewards. Meadowscaping provides endless opportunities to establish this vital connection. This guide provides information and inspiration for creating meadow plantings anywhere — even in containers — and features six fun, hands-on projects to delight and inform your young gardeners.





ABOUT AMERICAN MEADOWS

American Meadows wants to redefine the world's understanding of a meadow. When we look out over turf, dirt or concrete we see nothing less than glorious possibilities. Where others may see an urban apartment's patio, we see a pollinator pit stop for migrating wildlife. Where others may see a suburban lawn, we see opportunity for a cut flower garden. Where others may see a well-manicured country estate, we see a textural wildflower tapestry. Because when we meadowscape, we dig in. We become a force of good, and an advocate for pollinators and the environment, a friend to the community that brings beauty into the lives of everyone who passes by. We transform not only the land – we transform our lives – we nurture our own well-being and cultivate change. Learn more at AmericanMeadows.com/About-Us



ABOUT KIDSGARDENING

For 40 years, KidsGardening has led the youth gardening movement by creating opportunities for kids to play, learn, and grow through gardening. The national nonprofit provides grant funding, inspiration, community connections, and original educational resources to reach more than 3.8 million kids each year. Learn more at KidsGardening.org.



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Meadowscaping offers a new vision for our cultivated landscapes, and its benefits for our families, our communities, and our world are boundless.



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MEADOWSCAPING 101

Meadowscaping offers a new vision for our cultivated landscapes. Filled with flowers and native plants, meadows allow biodiversity to flourish by providing a haven for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. From patio containers to mini-meadows to large-scale plantings, meadowscaping transforms yards of all sizes into natural oases.

When we bring nature home to our yards, neighborhoods, school grounds, empty lots, unused paved spaces, and patios, the benefits for our families, our communities, and our world are boundless.



Benefits to Me

Meadowscaping contributes to my family's physical, mental, and social-emotional health by:

- Providing a nearby space to relax, reflect, and connect with nature.
- Offering opportunities to feel pride, confidence, hope, and joy.
- Encouraging physical activity outdoors in the fresh air.
- Supporting fun educational experiences and quality family time.

Benefits to My Community

Meadowscaping nurtures community and connection by:

- Cultivating awareness of and connection to the land, traditions, and people around us.
- Beautifying public spaces.
- Fostering positive interactions, nurturing friendships, and inspiring random acts of kindness.
- Providing opportunities for collaboration and teamwork.

Benefits to The World

Meadowscaping helps the environment on a local and global scale by:

- Increasing ecological biodiversity by cultivating an array of plant species.
- Creating a home for wildlife and supporting populations of birds and pollinators.
- Supporting water conservation and helping manage stormwater.
- Nurturing soil health, controlling erosion, and mitigating climate change by sequestering atmospheric carbon in plants and soil.

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

STEPS TO PLANTING A MEADOW



Whether you have space for just a few planters on your patio or have access to an entire yard just waiting for wildflowers, you can grow thriving meadow plants. Here are the basic steps to help you get your meadow growing:

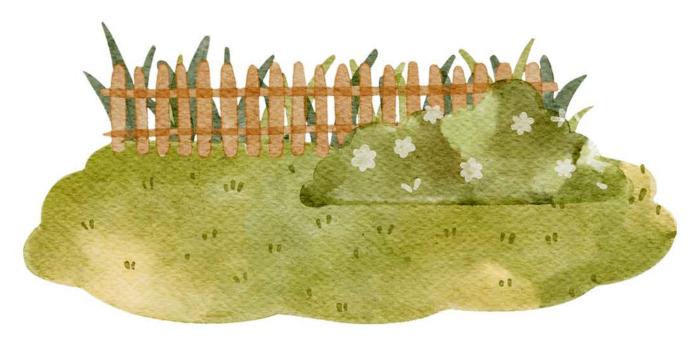
Find a site.

If you have a choice of locations for your meadow planting, evaluate the conditions at each of them. Take notes on the light, soil type, and soil moisture. Most meadow plants prefer full sun (8+ hours of sunlight) to part sun (4-8 hours of sunlight), so choose a spot that gets at least a half-day of sun.

Check the soil texture. Is it sandy? Clay? Some meadow 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." Adding organic matter, such as compost, improves all types of soil.

If you have a yard with a lawn, a natural place to start your meadow is to replace the grass around the perimeter; this allows you to maintain a mowed area for relaxation and play. You'll be surrounding yourself with beauty and reducing the amount of high-maintenance lawn.

Small-scale and urban locations can pose more of a challenge, but with a bit of creativity, you can grow a mini meadow anywhere! If in-ground beds aren't possible, consider planters and raised beds. Also, look for spaces in your community, such as easements, roadsides, and curb strips where hardy meadow plants with low water needs will brighten everyone's day. And don't forget to look up! Rooftop gardens are sprouting across the globe.



Choose appropriate plants.

In nature, meadows are filled with a diversity of plants with staggered bloom times to provide year-round food and shelter for wildlife. Similarly, your meadowscape will thrive when you select a wide array of plants that are adapted to your climate. Diverse plantings provide a ready supply of food and shelter for a variety of birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife. Choose plants with staggered bloom times for bouquets from spring to fall, flowers for crafts, and ever-changing displays that will cheer passersby and nurture community connections.

Start by looking for plants that are native to your region; they're adapted to your climate and support native pollinators. Non-native plants can also be good choices; however, take care to avoid plants deemed invasive in your region. If you're planting in containers, look for varieties described as compact. When combining plants, choose plants with varying heights and similar light and water needs.



Planting and Maintaining Your Meadowscape

For inspiration and step-by-step instructions for planting and maintaining a meadowscape, visit American Meadows:

Meadowscaping Makes It Better

www. americanmeadows.com/meadowscaping

How To Prepare Your Site For Planting Wildflower Seeds

www.americanmeadows.com/wildflower-gardening/how-to-prepare-your-site-for-planting-wildflower-seeds

Our Complete Guide To Growing Wildflowers

www.americanmeadows.com/wildflower-seed-planting-instructions

MEADOWSCAPING ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR KIDS

Now it's time to enjoy your meadowscape! Here are six fun, hands-on projects that will delight and inform your young gardeners.

Theme 1: How Meadowscaping Helps Me

Project 1: Observe Nature Through Journaling

Journaling helps kids grow their writing, art, and observation skills. Doing so in a meadow setting engages them without overstimulating their senses, helping them to feel calm and focused. Writing and drawing in a journal encourages kids to watch nature up close and record their observations. It fosters creativity as they dream up stories and encourages them to express their feelings.

Materials

- Journal of any kind (can be purchased or homemade)
- Pencils, pens, markers, and/or crayons
- A comfortable place to sit

Instructions

Purchase a journal or make your own and gather a few favorite writing or art supplies. Next, set aside some relaxed, chore-free time for kids to explore your meadow or a nearby green space. Encourage keen observation by visiting at different times of day so kids can observe and record the changes in plants and wildlife.

Before heading outside, set the stage with a few ground rules, such as: Respect all life in the garden and observe living creatures with your eyes, not your hands.

Younger observers may want to focus on drawings. Encourage older kids to take written observations and more extensive notes. If cameras are available, invite them to take photos that they can later add to their journals and/or use to create a digital journal or collage. Other ideas:

- Offer prompts, such as asking,
 - Close your eyes. What do you hear? What do you smell? Have them open their eyes and record their observations.
 - Look around for different colors. How many do you see? Draw pictures or use words to describe them.
 - If you could be any plant, what plant would you be? Why?
- If appropriate, have kids choose a few leaves or flowers to press between the pages of their journals.
- Have them make leaf or bark rubbings to add to the journals.
- Encourage kids to use print or digital field journals to identify the plants and wildlife they see. One handy tool is Seek by iNaturalist (created by California Academy of Sciences and National Geographic): https://www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app

Resources

Pollinator Journal

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-pollinator-journal/

Field Journal

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-make-a-field-journal/

Garden-Inspired Writing

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/digging-deeper-garden-inspired-writing/

Nurturing Creativity in Kids

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/digging-deeper-nurturing-creativity-kids/



Project 2: Delight All the Senses with a Mystery Box

With their incredible diversity of shapes, sizes, colors, scents, and textures, meadow plants offer limitless options for activities that engage the senses. Help kids learn to calm themselves, cope with stress, and be present in their surroundings by teaching them mindfulness skills using their senses. This mystery box game helps kids practice exploring natural objects with different senses.

Materials

- Old shoe boxes or brown paper bags
- An assortment of natural materials found in your meadow or a nearby green space
- Blindfolds (optional)



Instructions

Collect an assortment of natural materials from your meadow or a nearby green space. Select items that engage different senses, such as fragrant flowers, leaves with distinct textures, and seed pods that rattle.

Place each object in the boxes or bags. Ask kids to explore the items using senses other than sight. Position them so they can reach into the bag or box without looking or use a blindfold to make sure they don't peek.

Ask them to describe the object using their senses of touch, smell, and hearing. Encourage them to use as many adjectives and be as detailed as possible in their descriptions.

After they have thoroughly explored the object, ask if they can guess what it is. Once it's been identified, ask them to use their final sense of sight to describe the object. Then, if possible, go out into the meadow or greenspace to find its match.

Resources

Sensory Garden Plants

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/growing-guide-sensory-garden-plants/

Designing a Sensory Garden

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-designing-a-sensory-garden/

Mindfulness in the Garden

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-mindfulness/

Growing a Knowing Nose - A Scent Lesson

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/lesson-plan-growing-a-knowing-nose-scent-lesson/

Theme 2: How Meadowscaping Helps My Community

Project 3: Seed Balls to Share

Seed balls are small bundles of seeds, clay, and soil or compost. Although seed balls have been around since ancient times, they were rediscovered in the 1930s by the Guerilla Gardening movement as a way to covertly introduce vegetation by simply tossing the seed balls (or, on a large scale, dropping them from an airplane). They are still used today to revegetate areas burned by wildfires. On a small scale, seed balls are fun to make and give, and are an inexpensive way to sow meadow flowers.

Materials

- Non-toxic clay (available from craft stores, in prepared or powder form)
- · Compost or potting soil
- · Large bowl or pail for mixing
- Seeds (consider easy-to-grow seeds like cosmos, zinnias, and bachelor's buttons, as well as seeds for native plants such as milkweed, lupine, and rudbeckia, depending on your region)



Instructions

This project can get messy, especially if your kids will be mixing and forming the balls, so choose a suitable place, ideally a waterproof surface, and cover it with layers of newspaper for easier cleanup.

Start by mixing the clay and compost or potting mix in a large bowl or pail. You want to create a mix that is moist enough for you to form small balls, but that is not dripping wet. (Think cookie dough texture.)

- If you are using powder clay, mix it with compost or potting in equal parts, and then slowly add water and blend until moist. If the mixture feels too sticky, add more compost or potting soil. If it is too loose, add more clay.
- If you are using prepared clay, start with a base of clay and then slowly mix premoistened compost into the clay until it feels soft but can hold a ball shape.

Add seeds to the clay blend at a rate of about 2 tablespoons of seeds per cup of clay blend. Thoroughly work the materials together with your hands. Shape the mixture into balls about the size of a golf ball. You can plant the seed balls while they're still moist or allow them to air dry.

Find areas in your yard and surrounding community that could use a little green (ask permission first). Toss or place your new treasures directly onto bare soil. Water them after planting, or plant them just before a gentle rainstorm is predicted. The clay mix will break down, providing good conditions for seeds to grow.

Not only are seed balls fun to make and sow, and they're also inexpensive DIY gifts!

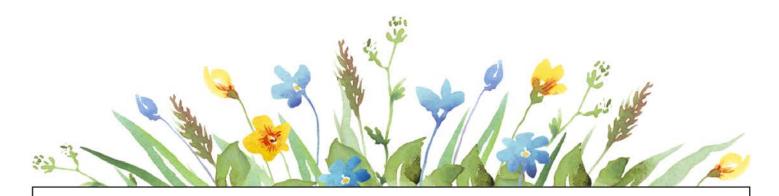
Resources

Seed Balls

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-seed-balls/

Wildflower Seed Paper

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-earth-day-seed-paper/



Project 4: Plant Smiles in Your Neighborhood

Meadowscape beautification projects bring communities together. A meadow planting not only adds beauty, but also invites collaboration and cooperation in the planning, planting, and maintenance activities. Plus, the flowers bring smiles to residents and visitors alike.

Meadowscapes come in all shapes and sizes. From a few planters at the entrance to a community building to a strip of land next to the sidewalk to a large patch of wildflowers, there's a meadowscape for every situation. The first step is to invite kids to get creative and dream up ways to beautify the neighborhood.

Materials

- Paper and/or graph paper
- · Pencils, colored pencils and markers
- Seed catalogs or internet access



Instructions

Encourage kids to brainstorm ways and places they can add a little beauty with meadow plants. Invite them to survey the neighborhood for suitable spots — both small and large — that would benefit from some living color.

The area should:

- Receives at least 4 (and preferably 8) hours of sunlight per day.
- Be visible to community members and visitors.
- Be located in a place with minimal foot traffic.*

*If an area seems suitable but plants could get stepped on, consider planting in raised beds or planters. Signage and low fences can help, too.

School grounds, parks, libraries, sports fields, and other community-owned spots are good places to start, as are the strips between sidewalks and roads. Churches might welcome some colorful plants. Also, don't rule out privately owned options. Corporations that have property abutting streets, empty lots, and landscaped areas in parking lots are all possibilities.

And don't forget to consider planters! How about a few at the entryway to your community center? Or on the porch of a retirement home?

Have kids research native meadow plants that grow well in your area. Find what plants your local butterflies depend on. Remind them that the greater variety of plants, the more pollinators and other wildlife their space will attract. Then it's time to write up a plant list.

Next, have them draw up a dream garden plan. This can be a simple sketch from a bird's eye view with plants represented as circles of different sizes. Or you can challenge older kids to draft a plan to scale. (Graph paper is very helpful if you want to introduce the concept of drawing to scale.) Have youngsters make a collage by cutting out pictures of plants from seed catalogs or magazines.

Ideally, your kids can now reach out to the people who own or maintain the spaces they're hoping to beautify. Have them consider how they'll communicate all the benefits that meadowscaping will bring to the community. Finally, encourage them to reach out to community members as well as local clubs and organizations that can help them turn their dreams into reality.

Resources

Planning a Pollinator Garden

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/lesson-plans-planning-a-pollinator-garden/

Plant a Butterfly Garden

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-plant-a-butterfly-garden/

Wonderful Wildflowers

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/lesson-plan-wonderful-wildflowers/

Consider Container Gardening

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/designing-a-school-garden-consider-container-gardening/











Theme 3: How Meadowscapes Help My World

Project 5: Pollinator Scavenger Hunt

Pollinators are animals that help many flowering plants produce their seeds by moving pollen from one flower to another. Bees, hummingbirds, moths, bats, butterflies, flies, and beetles are a few notable representatives. Pollination by these special animals ensures the continued existence of millions of plant species, and in turn, of most animal species, including humans – scientist estimate that one of every three mouthfuls of our food depends on a pollinator!

Researchers have documented a decline in the populations of many different pollinators over the last few decades. They have linked this decrease in numbers to several factors, one of which is loss of habitat. We can help by meadowscaping! Meadows of all shapes and sizes provide important food and nesting sites for pollinators.

A scavenger hunt in your meadow or a local greenspace is be a fun way to encourage young gardeners to practice using their observation skills while also increasing their knowledge and awareness of pollinators.

Note: This activity is best done in the spring through the fall as it is hard to find flowers and pollinators during winter months.

Materials

- A scavenger hunt list (make your own or use the one at the end of this guide)
- Clipboard
- · Pencil, pen, crayon, or marker



Instructions

Although nature provides many opportunities for unstructured exploration, giving kids a bit of structure helps build observation skills. A scavenger hunt is a perfect way to offer guidance while still offering flexibility for individual discovery.

Create a list of pollinators and pollinator-attracting plants commonly found in your meadow and/or greenspace. The older the children participating in the hunt, the more specific your list can be. For example, you can ask young kids to find a butterfly, and ask older kids to find a monarch butterfly. To adapt the activity for youngsters, use pictures to make your list (hand drawn or cut from a magazine).

Place your list on a clipboard, then grab a writing implement, and visit your meadow or a park, nature trail, or another community greenspace. Have kids check off or circle everything they find on the list. (Invite them to write down other pollinator-related finds too!)

Resources

Scavenger Hunt in the Garden

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/garden-activities-scavenger-hunt-garden/



Project 6: Save Our Soil

We walk on it every day, but we rarely stop to think about how important soil is to our world. Our very existence depends on the presence of healthy soil — to help us grow our food, to purify our water, and to store carbon and mitigate climate change. We must protect our soil wherever and whenever we can, and meadowscaping helps us do so.

A major cause of soil loss is erosion. When heavy rain hits bare soil it, the soil is readily washed away, damaging our landscapes. In contrast, when soil is covered with meadow plants, the roots hold the soil firmly in place, preventing erosion. The plants also improve water absorption and aid in stormwater management. This fun, simple experiement introduces kids to the concept of erosion and helps them visualize how plant roots hold soil in place.

Materials

- Two shallow, rectangular trays such as aluminum sheet pans
- Soil or potting mix
- Fast-growing seeds like ryegrass or wheatgrass



Instructions

Add a 1" layer of moist soil to the trays. Leave one tray unplanted. In the other tray, scatter seeds of fast-growing plants such as ryegrass or wheatgrass. Water the seeded tray as needed to keep soil moist. Wait two weeks, or as long as it takes the grass to grow 3-4" tall.

Place the trays side-by-side at the edge of a table or counter. Prop up the far ends about 2" high to create a slope downward toward the edge of the table/counter. Set up a basin below the trays to collect runoff.

Hold a watering can about 1' above the trays and gently sprinkle "rain" equally over both trays for about a minute, or as long as it takes for the bare-soil pan to start washing away. In contrast, most or all of the soil in the planted tray should remain in place.

Ask kids to imagine how these scenarios might play out outdoors. How might meadowscaping help hold precious soil in place and prevent erosion? As you drive about, notice areas with new construction or piles of bare soil and look for signs of erosion.

Resources

The Plant Soil Relationship

https://kidsgardening.org/resources/lesson-plans-the-plant-soil-relationship/

POLLINATOR SCAVENGER HUNT

Check the box for each pollinator that you find! Turn your hunt into a biodiversity survey by tallying the number of each animal found. Turn your hunt into pollinator bingo by seeing who can find every animal in a column, row, or diagonal first. These are all pollinators you can find during the day, but there are many beneficial nocturnal pollinators like bats and moths too!

