



With thanks to 'Going Wild in Bishop's Castle' project for sharing this leaflet across Shropshire Town and Parish Councils. This is the third of a series of leaflets

**from this Shropshire project: <https://lightfootenterprises.org/going-wild-in-bc>
Please collect them and use them as a resource for your household and Parish.**

“No Mow May”

Last year legions of Shropshire gardeners joined in with “No Mow May” to help our bees, butterflies, insects and wildlife. Please join in again in 2023 and beyond!

The “No Mow” campaign doesn't ask you to do much. In fact, it asks you to not do anything at all... Just lock up your lawnmower on May 1st (or earlier!) and let the wild flowers in your lawn and roadside bloom, providing a feast of nectar, connectivity and habitat for our pollinators.

We have lost 97% of our wild flower meadows over the last 100 years. This has had a devastating impact on wildlife – there are now more priority species for conservation associated with meadows than with any other habitat.

Road verges have huge potential to provide important areas of wild flower meadows and, crucially, to act as corridors which link together remaining fragments of meadow and other habitats. They can also help to store carbon and intercept flood water.

Gardens

When it comes to providing vital nectar and pollen for our insects, every flower counts and your lawn can help to provide a feast! The more wild flowers in your lawn, the more nectar will be produced. Don't forget the flowers of lawn grasses too; these may not look as colourful as wild flowers but they can be favourites of some of our wild pollinators.



What happens then?

At the start of June if you want to mow your lawn again get your mower back out but if you've enjoyed seeing the flowers and the insects then how about setting your mower blade high so that low flowering plants like clover or selfheal can continue to flower?

What else can I do to help?

If you have made a bug hotel (see Leaflet No 2 in this series), watch the bees collect pollen from your lawn and then use the hotel to lay their eggs.

At the end of No Mow May, how about keeping that mower locked away for another month or two and taking part in Let it Bloom June?

By leaving your lawn uncut for two months you may see some of our summer wild flowers coming through and getting a chance to flower.



After two months without mowing the grass will be harder to cut and may need a strimmer or scythe. After cutting make sure you rake up all of the grass cuttings and remove them. This is really important. If the cuttings are left unraked, or are mulched into the lawn then the wild flowers and fine grasses will be smothered and, over time, will be lost.

But I like having a short lawn

How about cutting part of your lawn and leaving the rest as a “No Mow” area? Maybe you can make the unmown part into an attractive shape or mow a little path through it for exploring? A small patch is miles better than none, so do what works for you, your garden and your family.

Roadside verges FAQs:

Won't the verges start to look messy and untidy?

It is true that verges managed for wildlife may look different to the style of verge we might be used to seeing. However, managing verges as wildflower meadows will make them much more valuable to wildlife, and will also store more carbon. There will

be more flowers in the verges in the spring and summer, which look beautiful as well as providing valuable nectar and pollen for insects.

Nature tends to like ‘messy’, and a thriving, wildlife-rich habitat full of life has a much richer beauty than a ‘tidy’, short-mown lawn which has no value to wildlife.

What about road safety & visibility?

Public safety is a primary concern and any verges which the Council list as needing to be cut short for visibility reasons will still be cut as normal. All ‘safety cuts’ on wide verges, where the part of the verge that borders the road is cut short, will still be carried out as normal.

How long does it take for a typical grassy area to become a flower-rich meadow?

The experiences from other projects have shown that it will take on average two to three years. However, much depends on how nutrient-rich the site is to begin with (wild flowers prefer nutrient poor soils). Other factors such as soil type, exposure, soil compaction and previous management will all play a part. However, this is

notice that verges being managed as wildflower meadows are cut slightly earlier or later than this.

What about paths and activity spaces?

Access paths and rights of way, along with amenity spaces such as playing fields, will still be cut regularly as before.

What will the verge look like?

When people think about a wildflower meadow they tend to think about a non-native high colour amenity planting display. This does provide a certain level of benefit to our pollinators but is a high cost and high maintenance option.

We hope to recreate more natural wildflower meadow habitats. There will be a reduction in dense, coarse grasses and an increase in finer native grasses and wildflowers which will improve year on year as the soil fertility reduces with every cut and lift.

The flowers that grow here will be colourful and attractive as well as being beneficial to wildlife, although the display will be more subtle than non-native high colour amenity plantings.

Will the verges be sprayed or fertilised?

Our native wildflowers and grasses thrive in nutrient poor soils, therefore no fertilizer or compost should be applied. We advocate hand pulling of weedy species that are dominant such as docks.

Will the verge attract rats if becomes a wildflower meadow?



An actively managed grassland is less likely to attract any more rodents than a verge full of overgrown, coarse grasses, nettles, brambles and litter.

What about Ragwort?

Although a beneficial plant to our pollinators, ragwort is designated a 'noxious weed' and is poisonous to livestock. If it becomes dominant or causing a potential hazard it can be hand-pulled or spot sprayed. If the grass is being cut for fodder it is essential to remove all ragwort before cutting.



Will managing the verges as meadows mean they become full of docks, thistles and nettles?

Quite the reverse! The current management regime, where verges are cut several times a year and the cuttings are left to rot down, is very likely to result in thistles, docks and nettles as they thrive in areas of high nutrients. But changing to an annual cutting and lifting regime as part of a new meadow management policy will, over time, prevent these species from becoming dominant.

What wildlife will the verges support?

Verges are basically linear meadows! Meadows and species-rich grasslands support a huge diversity and abundance of fine native grasses, wildflowers and fungi. This rich habitat supports a host of bees, flies, beetles, spiders, moths, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, bats and birds. In the UK and Ireland, more priority species (for conservation attention) are associated with wildflower-rich grasslands than with any other habitat type. See Saving Our Magnificent Meadows for more information on the importance of meadows: <http://magnificentmeadows.org.uk>

Why does No Mow matter?

We are in the middle of a biodiversity and climate crisis which threatens not only other species, but the health and wellbeing of future generations of people. This may seem unrelated to some small patches of verge or lawn in Shropshire, but every single patch of wildlife-friendly habitat, from a huge nature reserve to a window box, can play an important role in helping slow and stop this crisis.

If all our road verges became species-rich grassland they would also be able to store much more carbon.

Further information

Click on the web links below for more information.

- [Plantlife “No Mow May”](#)
- [Middle Marches Community Land Trust – Verge Leaflet](#)
- [Marches Meadow Group](#)
- [Countryfile “No Mow May”](#)
- [Take Action for Wildlife](#)
- [IDverde “No Mow” info sheet](#)

