

Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) sowing and maintenance guidance

The Yellow Rattle lifecycle:



Late May to June: Plants are in flower



July: Plants set seed (it is in this month that we normally harvest our meadows to obtain the Yellow Rattle seed for sale.)



August: As Yellow Rattle is an annual species the plants will die off in August after seeding. The plants will have dropped seeds from which the next year's plants will come from.



Early March: The first seedlings will begin to appear. A prolonged period of cold temperatures is required to trigger germination, and therefore the seedlings are only seen at this time.

March to early May: Plants grow from seedlings to their final height of around 30cm (depending on soil fertility), ready to flower.

Site preparation, method and time of sowing:

Yellow Rattle is a parasitic species that attaches to the root systems of several grass species, slowing down their rate of growth. **It cannot survive without a grass host.** Cut the grass as low as possible and remove all resulting cuttings (this should be a very severe cut, even exposing areas of bare soil for best results) prior to surface sowing the Yellow Rattle seeds. We would recommend a sowing rate of 1g/m². Tread (or roll for larger areas) the seeds in, to ensure they are in good contact with the soil.

If sowing in to an existing meadow you should wait until all of the wildflowers have finished flowering and had reasonable opportunity to set seed (this would typically be some time in August although this will depend on a number of factors) before cutting the area down. **Sowing should typically take place between late July** (when the fresh crop of Yellow Rattle is available) **and the end of November**; this is because a prolonged period of cold temperatures is required to trigger germination [vernalisation]

Seedlings should appear around early March depending on the season, and it is important not to mow or disturb the area between this time and when the plants will seed in July.

Frequently asked questions

- 1) **What species of grasses does Yellow Rattle prefer as hosts?** In our experience much better results are achieved on fine leaved species such as members of the Fescue (*Festuca*) family and Crested Dogstail (*Cynosurus*) rather than broad leaved species such as Ryegrass (*Lolium*) and Couch Grass (*Elymus*).
- 2) **What soil types will Yellow Rattle grow on?** Yellow Rattle is found across an extremely wide range of soil types from chalk, sandy, acidic and clay.
- 3) **Does Yellow Rattle tolerate shady conditions?** Yellow Rattle does best in full sun, although it will tolerate a semi-shade environment.
- 4) **Does it matter how old the Yellow Rattle seeds are?** Yes, the viability (germination rate) of Yellow Rattle declines markedly over time; even if stored in cold conditions. It is always best to use seed from the most recent harvest which will generally become available in late July each year.

About our Yellow Rattle seed: All of our Yellow Rattle seed is from our own meadows in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. It is thoroughly cleaned to obtain a pure sample of seeds before being placed in our purpose-built cold store which is maintained at 4 degrees Celsius. This ensures the seeds are kept in optimal conditions to ensure the highest possible germination rates.

About Naturescape: Naturescape was founded in 1978 by Brian and Liz Scarborough, who were joined by their sons Mark (in 1986) and Tom (in 2009). We remain a family-owned business committed to the production and promotion of British provenance seeds and plants, our visitor centre (which opened in 1990) has 45 acres of wildflower fields open to the public and gives an opportunity to see what can be achieved with native wildflowers and the great range of wildlife and insects that they attract.

We have been very fortunate to have been involved with some of the largest wildflower projects in the UK during our history including the London Olympic Games, the Grow Wild initiative (for Kew Gardens) and we are currently a key supplier for HS2 environmental schemes.

Our other products:



Yellow Rattle plugs (available April 2023), these are sown with a Fescue grass as the host species and can be ordered in advance. These offer an alternative option to Yellow Rattle seed.

Wildflower seeds: Over 250 individual species and a wide range of different mixes for every habitat and environment are available.

Wildflower plants: We have over 200 species that are also available as plug plants (these are well established seedlings- ready to plant directly in to the ground), and also more established plants in 9cm pots. Collections of plants suited to particular habitats are also available.

Wildflower bulbs: We have a very wide range of native bulb species available both in the autumn and in the spring (as bulbs in the green) such as English Bluebell, Wild Daffodil, Single Snowdrops and Wild Garlic among others.

Native pond plants including oxygenators, Bareroot trees (November to March only), Ferns, Roses and Climbers are also on offer.