

# Pleck Meadow FAQ

## Q- Why are we doing a cut and collect?

A- **To reduce nutrient content on the meadow so that our native wildflower species are able to thrive.** High nutrient soil allows for competitive species like Broad-leaved Dock, Creeping Thistle, Creeping Buttercup, White Clover, and a wide variety of grasses to become dominant, including non-native species like Perennial Rye-grass and Himalayan Balsam. This can suffocate slower growing species. Removing the cuttings mimics grazing behaviour from large herbivores, which we lack in the UK, creating a low nutrient soil which gives a higher diversity of wildflowers a chance to thrive.

## Q- Why don't we just let it be "natural" and grow "wild"?

A- **Many ecosystems in the UK lack the species needed to be fully self-sustainable and require human intervention.** Unfortunately, we do not have much natural or wild space in the UK anymore due to the disappearance of keystone species like large herbivores, apex predators, and aquatic mammals. This means that many habitats, like meadows and grasslands, cannot develop naturally and need some human assistance.

## Q- Why are meadows important?

A- **They are a vital habitat that benefits all levels of the terrestrial food web.** The UK has lost 95% of its meadow habitat in the last century alone. This makes it a rare habitat in desperate need of restoration. Meadows are very important to pollinators which rely on wildflowers for nectar, pollen, and as a food source for their larvae. And those pollinators provide a key function for our ecosystems, by assisting native plant reproduction and acting as a food source for birds, bats, small mammals, frogs, reptiles, and more! This then provides vital hunting grounds for larger mammals and birds of prey. Not to mention, a majority of our crops need to be pollinated to produce our food and/or seeds for the next generation of farming.

## Q- Won't a tractor kill anything living in the field?

A- **We are working in front of the tractor to scare away any potential casualties!** Before a tractor cut, we always walk through the meadow to ensure nothing large is nesting in the field. Unfortunately, we can't guarantee that the tractor won't harm/kill anything currently in the meadow at the time of the cut, but during a cut we use rakes in front of the tractor to scare out any critters like insects, voles, and frogs. Volunteers are on standby with buckets to collect and remove any

critters in danger! We also leave large boundaries around the meadow uncut to give plenty of safe space for critters throughout the autumn/winter months.

**Q- Will this have a negative affect on the local deer population?**

A- **No.** The deer will still have plenty of cover in the surrounding edges of the field which will be left long, as well as in the large amount of wooded habitat on Peel Park & the Coppice LNR. The meadow is only cut once a year and grows back to act as cover again the next year. On top of this, the deer will benefit from a biodiverse grazing habitat.

**Q- It doesn't look like a meadow, where are all the flowers?**

A- It can take several years of management to achieve a healthy wildflower meadow. And, while the goal is to have a high abundance & diversity of flowers, Pleck Meadow will not look like a garden flower bed. It will be full of a mixture of native wildflowers and grasses which, although aren't always as flashy, are of great benefit to native wildlife, particularly pollinators, birds, and small mammals.

**Q- What flowers have been seen so far?**

A- The attached page has photos of most of the flowers that have been recorded on Pleck Meadow. All photos are from the time of the project and were taken by the Project Officer in Pleck Meadow. As the health of the meadow improves, more species will appear. Furthermore, there are more species of wildflowers we have sown and planted but will need a bit more time before they are ready to flower.

**Q- Why are the ponds drying up?**

A- **The wetlands have been intentionally designed to be seasonal.** The wetlands were not constructed with a liner, but a thick clay base which can hold water but will still let a little bit through. This means that the wetlands won't hold water permanently year round. This reduces the chance of overflowing and provides habitat for animals and plants which prefer seasonal wetlands. Additionally, the wetlands may seem to have "dried up" as a big portion of them no longer have water in them. However, this is because vegetation has now grown and will be soaking up water. Lastly, the scrapes were made a bit bigger than they needed to be in-case they overflowed.



# Wildflowers (1)



Common Self-heal



Marsh Thistle



Black Medick



Lesser Trefoil



Ragged Robin



Common Hogweed



Red Campion



Rough Hawkbit



Ox-eye Daisy



Betony



Meadow Vetchling



Eyebright



Devil's-bit Scabious



Cat's-ear



Common Vetch



Bush Vetch



# Wildflowers (2)



06/07/2022  
Common Bird's-foot-trefoil



05/09/2024  
Greater Bird's-foot-trefoil



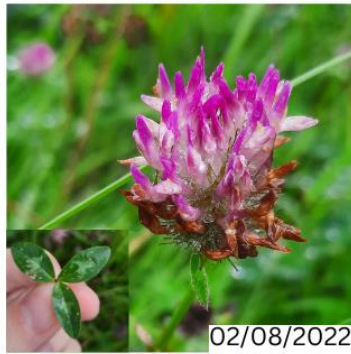
04/07/2024  
Common Knapweed



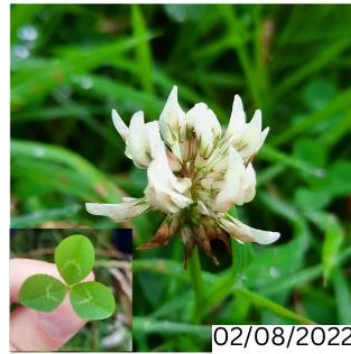
02/08/2022  
Sneezewort



02/08/2022  
Rosebay Willowherb



02/08/2022  
Red Clover



02/08/2022  
White Clover



02/08/2023  
Tufted Vetch



02/08/2022  
Honeysuckle



02/08/2022  
Meadowsweet



08/07/2024  
Yellow Rattle



12/05/2023  
Cuckoo Flower



05/09/2024  
Purple Loosestrife



05/09/2024  
Square-stalked St John's-wort



05/09/2024  
Lesser Spearwort



06/07/2022  
Common-spotted Orchid