

# **WILDFLOWER PLANTINGS**



## **GUIDE FOR GROUP PLANTINGS**

### **TWO METHODS**

- 1. HAND SOWING**
- 2. SEED BALLS**



# Hand Sowing in Large Areas

## Directions for All Ages



**Wildflowers Along Buffalo Bayou**

1. First get permission from the proper authority to plant in the area you have selected - parks, school grounds, medians, any public right-of-way, alleys, utility easements, private property, etc.
2. Survey area for sowing the wildflower seed, and look for any areas of exposed dirt. **Seeds do better if they have direct soil contact.** The area should have good drainage and sun exposure. Even if you are working in an area covered with grass, try to scratch the soil surface by using a metal rake or hoe. (**no deeper than one inch**) To assure that the seeds are more evenly distributed over an area, first mix the wildflower seeds and sand (or very fine soil) together in a wheelbarrow or large container.
3. Evenly broadcast the mixture of seeds and sand over the area. In a strong wind you have to broadcast close to the ground. Best control is found by using your finger tips to release the mixture – pouring or shaking directly from buckets or cups is not a good method. Remember to go back over the area to “stomp” the seeds – making sure there is **good contact between soil and seeds**.
4. Demonstrate to volunteers the proper way to **scratch, sow, and stomp**. If it is a large area, you might divide into teams assigned to different areas each with a team leader. Proceed using one of these three methods: 1.) Scratch the entire area before beginning to sow. 2.) Divide your area into sections with each volunteer responsible for one small section. 3.) Divide the volunteers into scratchers, sowers, and stompers.

5. For very large groups of volunteers, it helps to evenly divide the sand/seed mixture into buckets since there is a limited supply of the mixture. Each team leader will have an assigned area, and they will get a bucket full of the mixture and enough paper cups for all their volunteers. These team leaders will need to oversee the distribution of the cups of sand/seed mixture to their team to assure the seeds are spread over their entire designated area.
6. Miscellaneous suggestions:
  - \* Heavy rains will wash some of the seeds down the slope, so sow heavier on the upper section of a slope and remember to stomp.
  - \* Do not sow where there is evidence of heavy erosion.
  - \* Avoid planting in low spots that hold water.
  - \* Flour is useful in marking the ground into planting sections if you need a visual reference for volunteers.

**Supplies needed:** wheelbarrows, metal rakes and/or hoes, bags of sand, wildflower seeds, buckets, paper cups, signs to mark a “no-mow” area to protect the wildflowers from the mowers.

Note: For best chance of a successful planting:

- \* Most seeds should be planted in the fall months (September to December)
- \* Select seeds that have high germination rates such as:

Black-Eyed Susan (*Rubecia hirta*)

Cornflower/Bachelor's Button (*Centaurea cyanus*)

Showy Primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*)

Indian Blanket/Firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*)

Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*)

Mexican Hat (*Ratibida Columnaris*)

Moss Verbena (*Verbena tenuisecta*)

Plains Coreopsis/Calliopsis (*Coreopsis tinctoria*)

Red Corn Poppy/Flanders Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)

Lemon Mint (*Monarda citriodora*)

Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Tickseed/Lance-leaved Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)

Wine Cup (*Callirhoe involucrate*)

Two sources for seeds and more information:

1. **Native American Seed Company** <http://www.seedsource.com>

The “Lady Bird’s Legacy Wildflower Mix” is excellent.

[https://www.seedsource.com/catalog/detail.asp?product\\_id=1814](https://www.seedsource.com/catalog/detail.asp?product_id=1814)

2. **Wildseed Farms** <https://www.wildseedfarms.com/>

# The Seed Balls Method of Wildflower Planting

Another method of dispersing wildflower seeds is by making seed balls. This is a fun project for kids and particularly Scout groups. It takes at least two separate sessions. First session make the seed balls and allow them to dry for several days. Second session is to disperse the seed balls in a suitable area where you have obtained permission. Detailed information on why seed balls work can be found on the Internet:

<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/special/children/making-seed-balls.htm>



## Seed Ball Recipe

- 5 parts pottery dry red clay mix from your local ceramic/art store
- 2-3 parts potting soil or compost
- 1-2 parts seeds of your choice (recommended native wildflower seeds listed below)
- 1-2 parts water
- Large tub to mix ingredients
- Large cardboard box and newspaper to dry and store seed balls

## Directions:

1. Mix the dry clay, soil and wildflower seeds together in a bowl. Slowly add water until the mixture is the consistency of the toy store molding clay that comes in a can.
2. Keep kneading the dough until the seeds are well mixed in. Add more water if necessary.
3. For extra guidance, watch the instructional YouTube video with Jaime Gonzalez of Katy Prairie Conservancy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul7evGKseAQ>
4. Take small bits of the clay mixture and roll into ball about ½ inch in diameter about the size of a marble. Large enough so seeds do not stick out of ball. The balls should hold together easily. If they're crumbly, add more water.
5. Dry seed balls for about 3 days in a dry, shady place before sowing or storing. They store best in a cardboard box. Do not use plastic bags or they will stay too moist.
6. The last step in how to make flower seed balls is sowing them. You can place them carefully over the area (1 per square foot) or you can toss them one at a time. Don't bury



them and don't water them. Making a small depression in the ground and placing a seed ball in the depression works well particularly on sloping ground.

7. Now sit back and leave the rest to Mother Nature.

The seed ball recipe can easily be altered simply by changing the seeds. For Houston/Galveston area use Lady Bird's Legacy Wildflower Mix from Native American Seed

[www.seedsource.com](http://www.seedsource.com), or choose seed with good germination rates. See list below:

**Black-Eyed Susan (*Rubeckia hirta*)**  
**Cornflower/Bachelor's Button (*Centaurea cyanus*)**  
**Plains Coreopsis/Calliopsis (*Coreopsis tinctoria*)**  
**Showy Primrose (*Oenothera speciosa*)**  
**Lemon Mint (*Monarda citriodora*)**  
**Indian Blanket/Firewheel (*Gaillardia pulchella*)**  
**Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)**  
**Mealy Blue Sage (*Salvia farinacea*)**  
**Tickseed/Lance-leaved Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)**  
**Mexican Hat (*Ratibida Columnaris*)**  
**Wine Cup (*Callirhoe involucrate*)**  
**Moss Verbena (*Verbena tenuisecta*)**

Doris Durbin Heard  
The Garden Club of Houston