

Richmond Meadows

We have established a number of flowering Meadows around the borough over the last few years. Some of these have been Annual Meadows, which last for one growing season, but the majority have been Perennial Meadows, which will last for many years to come. The Meadows, which are wonderful for wildlife, have been designed to produce lots of colourful flowers over as long a period as possible. The grass content varies between the different seed mixes, with some Meadows including grasses and others being composed purely of flowers.

The Council is now trialling a new approach for some of its meadow areas, where we are encouraging the meadows to naturalise. This involves reducing the nutrients in the soil by cut and collecting the meadow areas three times a year. By removing the cuttings, this prevents nutrients returning to the soil, reducing the nutrient levels in the soil and therefore improving the conditions for wildflowers to establish. Wildflower seeds that exist within the seed bank of these meadows would then be able to establish more successfully and would have less competition from weeds.

The locations where this is being trialled are:

- Crane Park, Twickenham
- Old Deer Park, Richmond
- Junction of Dukes Avenue and Riverside Drive, Ham
- Partridge Green, Hampton
- Manor Road Recreation Ground, Teddington

The Annual Meadows

Poppy Meadows were sown annually across the borough between 2014 and 2018 to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. Annual meadows technically only flower for one year, however there can be a degree of self-seeding and so each location was monitored over following years to see if the poppies returned for a second or third year.

In 2019, as the centenary had passed, no new poppy meadows were sown, however some of the locations were still providing a good display of colour and so have been kept.

These can be found at:

- Broughton Avenue, Ham
- Buckingham Road, Hampton
- Kew Green, Kew
- North Sheen Recreation Ground, Kew
- Pages Green, Hampton

The Council will continue to monitor these meadows and if they unfortunately succumb to weeds then the Council will look to return them back to amenity grass.

Planted Urban Meadows

These look different to the Meadows established from seed and mats, as there are fewer plants per m² but the individual plants are larger. Grasses are an important component of these Meadows, making up one third of the mix.

Planted urban meadows can be seen at:

- Church Road, Barnes
- Gothic Gardens, Richmond
- Heathfield Recreation Ground, Heathfield
- Nelson Road (junction of Warren Road), Whitton

- Old Deer Park Carpark, Richmond
- Radnor Gardens, Twickenham
- Priests Bridge, Barnes
- Small Profits Dock, Barnes
- Terrace Gardens (by the terraced slope), Richmond

Going forward, the Council are considering planting more perennial urban meadows at new sites across the borough to help improve biodiversity.

The new Pollinator Action Plan will be looking at assessing what we have in terms of pollinator habitat throughout the borough and from there we will be able to identify the gaps and make recommendations to create and enhance habitat where necessary.

One possibility is to change the maintenance schedule of some highway verges to allow wildflowers to naturally develop and create new habitats along our highways verges.

Threats to the Meadows

Climate

We are living in changing and unpredictable times for public Parks as well as private Gardens, and are experiencing extraordinary weather patterns on a regular basis. What this means is that weather conditions in certain years will favour certain species over others, so the dynamics of the Meadows may change from year to year, but this should be considered part of their natural beauty. It is our intention to manage them in as sustainable way as possible, but if we experience very hot, dry or windy weather at crucial times of the growing season, we will irrigate the Meadows if necessary, and if the Meadows become stressed or vandalised, we may have to cut them down early, to enable them to recover and flower as intended in successive years.

Vandalism/Trampling

The Meadows are very resilient, but they are all vulnerable to trampling by humans and animals. If areas of Meadow become trampled when the plants are young, the ground becomes compacted which deters plant growth, and this can have a long term impact on the success of the Meadow.

If the Meadow are trampled when the plants are in full growth, the flowers will remain flattened on the ground, which not only takes away the beauty of seeing them growing and flowering for that summer, but also prevents the flowers underneath from growth up. The effects of trampling Meadows when in full flower are unlikely to be permanently damaging, but it may mean we have to cut the Meadow down several months earlier than intended which will be a loss both to humans and to wildlife.

It has been necessary to protect many of the Meadow areas with temporary fencing, but we would prefer not to have to use this. We would ask that everyone respects the Meadows and allows them to be appreciated by everyone.