Grassland - cutting and enhancement

Grassland management can be varied to gain different results depending on how the area is to be used. The following illustrates some of the main cutting regimes that can be adapted for a variety of end results:

- **Springtime wildflower meadow** - Cut from mid-June onwards after spring flowering.
- **Summer wildflower meadow** - Cut until mid-May then leave to flower.
  (NB: you may need to alter the timing of cutting depending on what part of the country you are in e.g. flowering season could be different between the Borders and Shetland)
- **Full season wildflower meadow** - One cut in autumn (late September/October depending when seeds have set).
- There can sometimes be a perception that grasslands being managed as wildflower meadows look ‘untidy’ at certain times of the year. In areas open to general access you can create a managed look to these by mowing a narrow strip around the edge and one or more narrow paths through them. An information panel will also help to communicate the benefits of the management regime being adopted.
- **Livestock grazing** on your grassland can also be effective for enhancing biodiversity depending on the duration and type of grazing. Find out more about this in the Farming and Croftland pages of the website.
- **Floral lawn** – Should be cut between flowering seasons, ideally in early spring, then June/July and August/September - this management method will encourage flowering throughout the summer growing season, but remember to allow seeds to set at each stage.
- **Amenity grassland** – Regular cutting throughout the growing season. This management method usually results in low species diversity as slower and larger growing plants are not given the opportunity to establish.

Enhancing grassland by introducing bulbs and wildflowers:

Wildflowers and bulbs can actively be grown or planted into existing grasslands to improve biodiversity. There are many commercially available wildflower seed mixes, native plant species, and bulbs, on the market.

It is important to ensure that the species chosen are suitable for the soil conditions of the site, and that any young plants or bulbs are not taken from the wild. These actions will both increase the number of plant species present and will provide additional food sources for many species such as invertebrates and small mammals.

Incorporating new habitat features:

If appropriate, new micro-habitats can be introduced to grassland areas. For example:

- Place large stones or boulders in suitable sunny areas, to provide sunny perching spots for butterflies and other invertebrate species. Letting the vegetation grow around the edges of these will provide additional habitat features.
- Logs from tree/shrub pruning or felling can be cut into suitable lengths and strategically stacked in piles to create shade and habitat for amphibian, reptiles, invertebrate, fungi
and lichens. The logs will gradually be recycled back into the earth, as they get weathered and the fungi and invertebrates break them down.

- Leaving a bit bare ground in locations such as flower beds can provide foraging habitat for small mammals such as hedgehogs, which will eat slugs!

**Relevant Guidance:**
There are many guides on managing grasslands for biodiversity. Some of the most useful are outlined below:

- [Springs and flushes booklet](#)
- [Grasslands for plants and animals](#)
- [Grasslands booklet](#)
- [Grassland creation](#)
- [Create Your Own Wildflower Meadow](#) (Plantlife)
- [Design manual for roads and bridges Vol 10, Section 3.1: The Wildflower Handbook](#)
- [Land management for butterflies](#) (Scotland’s Rural College)
- [Grassland Gems: Managing Lawns and Pastures for Fungi](#) (Plantlife)