

Wildflower's

By

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I am often asked about planting a "wildflower" garden. Then I wonder what the objective of the individual is. I think one thing that generally distinguishes the difference between a flower garden and a wildflower garden is the type of plants utilized. Generally, wildflowers are native plants that have not been "domesticated." The overall look of the planted area is typically different, although any combination of plants can be used in both situations.

One thing I see is the packets of wildflower mixes, advertised. Then the landowner scatters this seed on the ground and hopes the picture on the package is what they will get for the next 10 years. The next year the landowner wonders why things are starting to look a little different. Then their wildflower planting turns into a weed patch.

The overall requirements of native plants are less than other more ornamental types of plants. The native plants use less water, fertilizer and care. The planting if done properly can create a low maintenance garden. But some of the wildflowers that come in mixes may not over winter in our climate, or may take over a year for the seed to germinate.

The first thing is to come up with a design plan for the area. Probably the best situation would be to start with a bare ground area. This can be accomplished by several means but if the undesirable plants are taken care of first for at least one growing season your success will be greater. A person can use "Roundup" to kill the vegetation and or till the area several times.

Next you should decide on the type of plants to go into your garden. Some of the information I have been reading recommends putting some grass into your design. The two main thoughts about adding grass in a natural setting is seeing Forbes(wildflower's) mixed in with grass, and by adding grass you help eliminate weeds and other non desirable grass. The best types of grass would be native types and maybe warm season types, along with bunch grass types (non-root spreading). Some of these types of grasses would include Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian Rice Grass, Sideoats grama, Prairie Dropseed, Blue grama and Buffalo grass. The cool season type of grasses especially Kentucky Bluegrass should be avoided as these will take over the planted area.

The type of native flower's you put in will depend on the colors, height and texture that will complement the rest of the garden. But there are many resources available for making this decision. A person can use any combination of annual and perennial plants. But perennial plants will give a more maintenance free garden. A wildflower garden can create quite a focal point to your landscaping design, while saving water and creating other benefits, such as attracting insects.

Other features can be added to a wildflower garden include rocks, shrubs, or other decorative items. These items can add contrast, and break up a larger area and give a unique look or feel to the area. However, if a large area of just wildflowers is what you are after then that is ok. Be careful of using invasive plants and especially plants that are on the Wyoming's noxious weed list. Examples include Ox-eye daisy and Purple Loostrife.

Native wildflowers are a great contribution to any landscaping, whether it is in a mass planting or just my adding individual plants to a bedding area. So

get out there and start planting. One of the most liked exhibits at the Denver Botanical garden is the "native prairie". I really like that one myself.

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