

## Up Close

# MEADOW FLOWERS

Wildflower meadows are beautiful. There is nothing more wonderful to see than uncut grass, sprinkled with colourful flower heads, blowing in the wind. But meadows are not just a thing of beauty. They also provide a wonderful habitat for a variety of animal life. The grasses and wildflowers attract butterflies, caterpillars, spiders and grasshoppers, as well as many insects, which in turn attract insect-eating birds such as wrens, swifts, swallows and house martins. Small mammals, like mice and shrews, also hide in the tall grass, and are often hunted by foxes and birds of prey. Why not turn part of your garden into a meadow, or create a Fairyland garden (see page 6) and see what wildlife it attracts? Here is a small selection of wildflowers that are common in meadows.

Photos: © Robbie Murphy



### Field Scabious

*Knautia arvensis* Cab an ghasáin

Field Scabious is a perennial, often flowering the first year. Its name comes from the fact that it was used as a cure for scabies and other skin complaints. It is a lovely flower with pretty flattish pincushion heads. It is common and widespread in dry grassy places, and adds a splash of colour to the late summer countryside.

**Flower Colour:** From pale pink to reddish-purple

**Height:** 20-60cm

**Leaves:** Long-stalked with 3 oval leaflets, often marked with a whitish crescent.

**Flowering season:** May-September

### Common Knapweed or Hardheads

*Centaurea nigra* Mínscoth

Common Knapweed is a perennial plant. Its tough hard stems are strongly ribbed, and with a hard globular bud, topped with purple flower head, the plant is aptly named "Hardheads". It is widespread in grassy areas, flowering all summer long.

**Flower Colour:** Reddish-purple with brown bracts at base.

**Height:** 30-180cm

**Leaves:** Oval or spear-shaped

**Flowering season:** June-September

**Habitat:** Grassland, sea-cliffs and coastal heathland.



### Yarrow

*Achillea millefolium* Athair thalún

Yarrow is a perennial plant and is common in grassy places, particularly lawns, hedgerbanks and waste ground. It is very tolerant of drought conditions so can often be seen thriving during dry spells. A number of coloured varieties have been cultivated in cottage gardens.

**Flower Colour:** White or cream, rarely pink

**Height:** 10-100cm

**Leaves:** Fern-like and feathery

**Flowering season:** June-November

**Habitat:** Common in grassland, road-verges, fields and waste places.

### Red Clover

*Trifolium pratense* Seamair dhearg

Red Clover is widespread in grassy and waste places and is the most common of the red coloured clovers. Many plants come from the more luxuriant cultivated varieties used for feeding animals. A perennial herb, it is an important bee flower; the bees cross-pollinate the plants.

**Flower Colour:** From pale pink to reddish-purple

**Height:** 20-60cm

**Leaves:** Long-stalked with 3 oval leaflets, often marked with a whitish crescent.

**Flowering season:** May-September

**Habitat:** Abundant in grassland and road verges.



© 2007 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.