

## From Landscape to Garden - with Wildflower Meadows

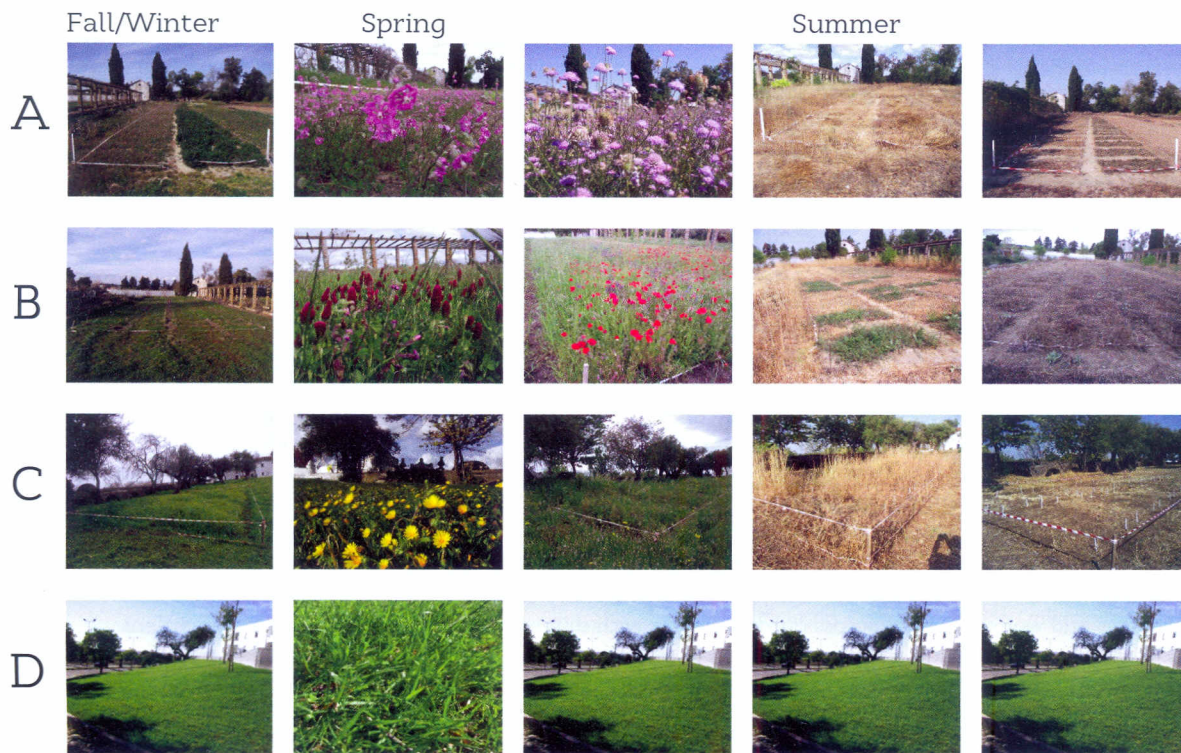
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1. Sets A to D, where: A is a flower meadow (fm) sown with two different native species (ns); B is a fm sown with several different ns; C is a fm with species that arose spontaneously on site; and D is a traditional lawn

of thinking. Wildflower meadows, when composed by native species, are not very appreciated by the general public. However perception preferences differ enormously among individuals, age groups, genders and cultures as with individual experience with truths being relative rather than absolute. Some people look at meadows in urban areas as places unkempt, valueless or even frightening, and seem to prefer a controlled environment as the one that lawns offer. The mediterranean area is a hot spot for biodiversity. However when we look at the ground covers in green spaces, lawns are the majority. The experiences with wildflower meadows used in Portugal were made with mixes imported from other countries, and they reveal not being adapted to the mediterranean climate. This led us to the experience of using wildflower meadows with spontaneous species from the mediterranean rural landscape. In this present work we compare the use of wildflower meadows from our field essays with traditional lawns used in every urban green space in Portugal. To this we evaluated public preferences in terms of wildflower meadows or lawns use in Mediterranean urban landscapes.

The method used was an on-line survey that was defunded by all our contacts. The ground covers used were three wildflower meadows from field essays and the fourth site was a common overleft space with a lawn (Figure 1). All sites are located in Évora, a city in the south of Portugal. The images chosen for represent each site show different times of the year, representing seasonal changes of each ground cover.

358 valid responses were obtained, majority from feminine gender (62%). Globally the results show a division in the preference for wildflower meadows (30%) or lawns (28%). However women tend to prefer wildflower meadows while men prefer lawns. In terms of color, diversity, and seasonal variation evaluation, both genders prefer wildflower meadows. Lawns were understood as uniform soil covers. To substitute lawns the choice is to use very diverse wildflower meadows. This survey gives good answers about public preferences on this matter and appoints to future studies in order to better understand this issue.

We can conclude, from this work that wildflower meadows were understood as a good alternative to lawns. We should insist continuing with this issue with the landscape architects, the landscape managers and the general public in order to inform and educate in order to create more sustainable urban landscapes and increase the urban quality of life. Wildflower meadows can be an advantage to landscape architecture to regenerate urban areas with economic and ecologic benefits. Wildflower meadows can contribute to create more resilient and sustainable places.

Since the middle age wildflower meadows are used to bring the flowers from the natural and rural areas into the urban landscapes. Wildflower meadows can improve the quality of Green Infrastructures as they increase biodiversity. However, after a few centuries of given flowers a principal part of lawns started to be used in every kind of places leading to a green obsession. Nowadays, urban lawns are covering more than 70% of urban green spaces all over the world. Frequently design options aren't environmental or ecologically friendly, and lawns are this example. Lawns are green deserts, with low biodiversity, and unsustainable. Wildflower meadows are an alternative to lawns, more sustainable, less resource consumer and much more biodiverse. In the regions with a Mediterranean climate water is a limit factor, especially in summer. Green spaces consume huge quantities of water in these conditions and the vegetation used in Mediterranean climate should be well adapted, which lawns aren't.

However many years using lawns as a dominant ground cover in urban green spaces has transformed people's view