

Arable Seed Swap Frequently Asked Questions

How do I store cornfield flower seed?

Seed should always be stored in a cool, dry place. The best way to ensure that seed stays viable in storage is to keep it in an airtight container in an ordinary domestic fridge. Make sure there is some silica gel in the container to ensure it stays dry. For more detailed information, see the [Storing Seed](#) leaflet on the Colour in the Margins webpage.

How do I sow cornfield flower seed?

Getting cornfield flowers to grow in your garden or allotment is easy – treat them like any other annual wildflower seed, and sow into a well-prepared seed-bed. They will usually do even better if sown into a suitable compost in a pot or seed tray, where the environment can be controlled more effectively. Some species do better if sown in autumn and others prefer spring. For more information see the leaflet on [Plug Planting, Allotments and Small Scale Sowing](#) on the Colour in the Margins webpage.



What arable wildflower seeds can I have?

There are several different species that may be available from members of the Arable Seed Swap Facebook group, including Shepherd's-needle, Corn Buttercup, Corncockle, Night-flowering Catchfly, Red Hemp-nettle, Wild Pansy, Common Poppy, Spreading Hedge-parsley and Weasel's-snout. Just search on the group for the wildflowers you'd like and/or ask the group what other members have to offer.

Can I claim back the postage of sending seeds?

Sorry - the postage cost for sending seeds to other members is not covered by the Arable Seed Swap group or by Back from the Brink. However, there is no need to send it tracked or insured – first or second class post is just fine.

When is the best time to sow?

Most cornfield flowers will do well if sown in either the spring or autumn, but for the best results, it's worth finding out a little bit more about the plant concerned. For example, does it normally germinate in spring? Or autumn? Does it need cold treatment to boost germination? Or warmth to mature the seed? For more information, see the leaflet on [Collecting and Sowing Seed](#) on the Colour in the Margins webpage. If in doubt, sow the plants in the autumn, as they are all annuals which, in the wild, shed their seed before winter.

Where can I find more information about the species?

There is a huge amount of information on the Back from the Brink website. Go to the [Colour in the Margins](#) page, then scroll down to a yellow download bar – click on this to see all the documents you can download. This includes family-friendly activities, resources for school and higher education students, identification sheets, information on target species and habitat management guides.

Arable plants - a field guide by Phil Wilson and Miles King, published by WILDGuides (ISBN 9781903657027), is an excellent resource for anyone with an interest in these plants.



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Are there particular plants that grow better in certain conditions?

Different arable plants do have particular preferences for certain types of soil. Corn Marigold and Weasel’s-snout do best on sandy soils, while Red Hemp-nettle does best on chalky and limestone soils, and Shepherd’s-needle, Corn Buttercup and Spreading Hedge-parsley on clay soils. There is more individual species information on the Colour in the Margin webpage <https://naturebftb.co.uk/the-projects/colour-in-the-margins/>.

Can I use the seeds to make/share/sow seed bombs or seed onto arable farmland?

We do not advocate or encourage the deliberate sowing on any plants on any land without the permission of the landowner or manager. If you are considering using wild plant seeds to introduce plants into the wild, then there are a number of things you need to take into account to make sure the introduction is successful and, more importantly, to make sure that your actions do not cause problems for other wild plants. See the [Good Practice Guidance for Sowing on Arable Farmland](#) for more information.

Can I buy arable plant seed for sowing in my garden or allotment?

There are a number of places where arable plant seed can be purchased, including some rare species. However, the seed may not always come from the UK. For example, as Cornflower is so rare in the UK, much of the seed in packets comes from Europe and cannot be harvested sustainably from UK sources.



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Mixes of cornfield flowers sometimes can contain species that are not native to the UK. For example, many seed packets contain Austrian Chamomile *Anthemis austriaca* which might be called Corn Chamomile on the packet. Austrian Chamomile is not part of the arable plant flora in the UK and is a very recent introduction. This leads to confusion with our native Corn Chamomile *A. arvensis* which is Endangered and Stinking Chamomile *A. cotula* which is Vulnerable. We recommend purchasing individual species if you want to grow plants in your garden or allotment, or even better ask whether someone on the Arable Seed Swap group is growing a particular plant species and whether you could be sent any seed.

We would not advocate sowing bought seed mixes or single species into the wild as there are many factors to consider. For more information about sowing seed on farmland, see the [Good Practice Guidance on Sowing on Arable Farmland](#).

Can I send my seed elsewhere to be stored?

The main purpose of this group is to share seeds for the enjoyment of cornfield flowers, and to spread the word about the beauty and importance of these threatened plants. Many of the seeds have been collected, stored and shared already by the Royal Botanic Garden's Kew Millennium Seed Bank and therefore cannot be sent back for them for storage.

Can I collect my own seeds from nearby arable fields?

It is perfectly OK to collect seed from wild growing plants for your own use in the garden, though you should ask the landowners' permission first, and you must not collect seed for sale or other commercial use. Remember also that you should not trespass in order to collect seed, and that you should not collect seed from any nature reserve or protected site. If collecting seed from wild plants, only do so where there are large numbers of plants or seed-heads, and only collect a very small portion of the seed.

Seed must not be taken from any plant protected listed on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which includes a number of rare species of arable farmland, including Ground-pine, Small Alison, Broad-leaved Cudweed, Red-tipped Cudweed, Martin's Ramping-fumitory, Grass-poly, Rough Mallow, Field Cow-wheat, Cut-leaved Germander, Perfoliate Penny-cress and Fingered Speedwell. The full list of all plants protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-plants>.

