

SOWING CALIFORNIA WILDFLOWER SEED

CALIFORNIA NATIVE WILDFLOWER SEED is best sown early in the rainy season—any time from October to January. Seed mixtures usually contain both annual and perennial species that will bloom from spring through summer. If seeds of native bunch grasses are included in the mix, it will create even better and more natural conditions in your wildflower garden.

Choose an area with at least six hours of sun per day; part shade is okay for some species but generally, the more sun the better the results. Weed the area well and loosen the soil to a depth of about two inches. It isn't necessary to amend the soil as wildflowers thrive in poor soils.

Mix the wildflower seed with 1–2 quarts of river sand (NOT beach or playbox sand). This assures a more even spread and enables you to keep track of which areas have been seeded already. Scatter this mix over the area that has been prepared. Pat it down by hand as you go, or use a roller, or walk on it to assure good seed-to-soil contact.

Cover the seeded area with a light mulch such as straw or bark, but make sure it is not too densely covered. Water it evenly and thoroughly with a light spray. The seed needs to remain damp but not soggy in order to germinate, so if there are no rains, water every other day until the seedlings are up. Annuals should appear within a week. Perennials take longer.

If there are lots of birds in your garden, you may want to use a light row cover to protect the seeds and seedlings. This is a very fine white cloth, which lets water and sunlight through.

If regular rains fail after germination has occurred, it will be necessary to water at least once a week. Invest regular attention to weeding out unwanted species as most of these grow much faster than native perennials and will crowd them out. You will be rewarded by more vigorous growth of the native wildflowers. Expect the annuals to fade out over the years as the grasses and perennials get more established—that's the order of succession in nature. Let your wildflowers re-seed themselves for increasingly beautiful displays year after year!