

PM Turf Meadow Establishment and Aftercare

About PM turf

PM turf is not like any other wildflower or meadow turf in that it has been designed to be attractive to both people and wildlife and has often been described as somewhere between a perennial border and wildflower meadow. It is produced by expert growers with all the daily care and quality control required in the field so all the specialist work is done for you to ensure your successful Pictorial Meadow. This process from seed to turf takes between 12-16 weeks during the growing season from around April to October. The turf is grown on a soilless system and is rooted into a mesh which holds it together during transport. The turf production system is supervised at all stages by PM staff to ensure the composition is good, weed contamination acceptable and to sign off when it's ready for lifting. Each turf is individually lifted by hand at 1200mm x 600mm and placed flat on the pallet. The plants within the turf have a full root system when lifted which enables the meadow to establish quickly once laid onto bare ground.

The design mixes in the PM turf are unlike any other meadow turf so provide utterly unique products which;

- are a designed approach developed over many years by botanists and plant designers from research at The University of Sheffield and Pictorial Meadows
- are formulated to designed colour themes
- contain a designed mix of very carefully selected natives and non-natives
- contain some highly unusual and very successful robust species supporting biodiversity
- have a high flower content and visual impact
- are great for bees and other pollinators
- have a wide range of applications including steep banks
- are quick and easy to establish
- are a low maintenance solution

Availability

Check with sales as to current availability but this can be all year round. PM turf can be lifted from the field for transport in most weather apart from frost, snow or flooding. The turf is lifted the day before delivery to ensure it arrives fresh the next day and will need to be laid the same day as delivery.

Delivery

2 number 1200mm x 600mm turves are laid side by side flat with up to 50m² on each standard pallet ready for delivery. Delivery is usually Tuesday to Saturday but can be on a Monday by special arrangement. The next day before 10am service for England will ensure there is enough time for laying. This has a tail-lift and a pallet truck for offloading, which is for hard standing surfaces only. The driver will not be able to use the pallet truck over rough or unsealed surfaces. Most deliveries are carried out with the use of large articulated trucks, if access to your delivery site is limited and you require a smaller vehicle, you must let Pictorial Meadows know at the point of ordering. Please also specify at the time of pricing if a fork lift Moffatt is required to move the pallets from the vehicle unloading area to the site via hard standing only.

Preparation

The creation of bare soil is required prior to laying and can be achieved by cultivation or importing and spreading soil. On banks which are too steep to cultivate bare soil can be achieved by spraying off until the grass is dead and then cutting the dead grass tight to the ground. A second spray may be required if the bank should green up again. By watering the soil just before laying the turf roots will have all they need to get going.

Laying

To make the job easier and avoid double handling try and get the turf pallets as close as possible to the laying area. If it is not going to be laid immediately turf must be kept moist until it is laid. To gain access to the turves the pallet wrapping will need to be removed and disposed. The turves can be easily lifted individually by hand and laid on the prepared site. Do not expect the same dense sward that you would find with conventional grass turf – gaps are critical for correct structure. Expect a few turves to be very loose – handle with care and avoid using these on the edges. It is best to start by laying out an area with whole turves around the perimeter and infill the shape in straight lines with offset joints like a flat brick wall. Where cutting is required this can be easily done by folding back the turf and using a sharp knife with a Stanley type blade to cut from behind then simply lay back flat and pull apart. Try not to waste any off cuts as they all contain many valuable plants and are all usable to fill in gaps during laying. If working on a slope the turf should be pegged to the bank using Green Stake Pegs or similar with a minimum of 3 pegs per turf. On completion the turves should then be well soaked through immediately after laying. Summer establishment would require additional irrigation following laying but an autumn/winter laying would only require irrigation on the day.

After Care

To keep your meadow healthy and looking good for years to come it will need some intervention. The one task common to all meadow schemes is an end of season cut and collect. This controls weed and woody growth and promotes fresh growth of desirable plant species. The cut can take place any time after flowering has finished and seed has set. However, cut and collect can be done any time of year for various results as set out below.

Cutting down in spring when the plants have started to put on foliage will promote later flowering (this is sometimes referred to as 'The Chelsea Chop'). However, the closer to flowering the longer it will take to flower again. A spring cut can also help to promote a more compact meadow especially if the site conditions result in vigorous growth and leggy plants.

A summer cut can be used if a particular flower is dominating to reduce the number of plants this can be done when a particular plant is in flower. A summer cut can also be used to get a second flowering in late summer and autumn and is usually carried out after the main flush of flowers is over.

A late autumn cut can be used when the meadow has become visually unacceptable - once the flower has gone and the seed has set.

A winter cut between January and before spring. This is the latest the meadow should be cut before new growth starts to appear and can provide a wildlife habitat for winter birds, small mammals and insects. The dead stems can also look attractive especially with a frost.

Method for Cut and Collect

This depends on the size of the meadow. A few square meters of meadow can be cut with hand shears and raked off. A mechanical reciprocating cutter such as hedge cutters or a walk behind Scythe Cutter will make easy work of cutting but will need raking off. For larger meadows a tractor mounted cut and collect flail will do the job. Some of these come with a tipping collection hopper so the green waste can be loaded into a van. Be sure the cutting machine is robust enough to cut the meadow and not pull up the plants which can be the case with some rotary cutters especially if the blades are not sharp. Aim for a finished cut height of around 100mm.

Weeds

Every effort is made to ensure your PM turf arrives with as little weed as possible but there are those that can survive or find opportunities after the meadow has been laid. Well established meadows with good species composition are very resistant to invasion where any weed content should be minimal and remain at an easily manageable level. Many weed types will simply get out competed by the meadow or as with most annual weeds will not survive the cutting process. It is the more competitive perennial broadleaf weeds which we need to look out for such as docks, thistles, bindweed, rank grass, nettles and brambles and if left unchecked these can take a hold. Therefore every spring around May and again in mid-summer it is worth looking over the meadow and removing either by pulling or spot spraying.