FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

The Blooming Lawn Creating a Flower Meadow

Chelsea Green Publishing Co.
978-1-890132-18-7
(July 31, 1998)

The Blooming Lawn is at once an instructive how-to book packed with useful information on creating a wildflower meadow to restore part of the Earth's ecology, and a meditation.

In this age, when men and women buy such high-priced toys as speedboats and snowmobiles, Yvette and Mike Verner decided instead to buy a half-acre piece of land and create their own natural area. Theirs is a quiet recreation, filled with the joy of watching wildlife, from butterflies and birds to playful badgers. It is also one that fills the senses, from the "splendid" sight of large drifts of daisies and buttercups to the "sleepy, throbbing" hum of insects on a summer day.

Success requires care and attention, which is what meditation is all about. There is an answer to the question many pose about creating wildflower meadows: Can it be done without spraying the ground first with herbicides to kill off the existing and competing vegetation? The answer is yes. The way is with patience. It can take years, but the years are rich with learning.

The Verners created their seven-year-old meadow in small, manageable stages, planting trees and shrubs as a shelter for wildlife at one point; clumps of flowers that would spread at their own pace at another, rather than seeding an entire field. Some plants flourished, others fell to the ravages of insects, weather and weeds.

"A philosophical and patient outlook is desirable, but a touch of desperation can creep in on some days," she writes.

The couple learns that a layer of hay spread around the base of their hedges would protect them from weeds. After three or four years, the hedges had grown large enough to shade out the grasses on their own and provide cover for small animals.

Verner's book contains many such practical suggestions, including the necessity of periodic mowing and a loving description of various plants and how they grow. While Verner's meadow is in England, she's made her book useful for those of us in the United States and Canada with separate lists of meadow flowers, grasses, trees, shrubs and butterflies found in the British Isles and North America. Both lists include soil requirements for each plant and the kind of plants preferred as food by each butterfly caterpillar. An extensive bibliography and

addresses for seed and plant suppliers also are provided for both sides of the Atlantic. Photographs and fine illustrations show various species of animals, birds, plants and insects and the Verners' meadow.

There also are good instructions for projects such as bird and bat houses, and my favorite: meadow furniture. She writes: "Incidentally, a three-seater bench is long enough to lie down and go to sleep on, a handy attribute for sunny afternoons."