



PRACTICE ABSTRACT № 5

Keywords

Biodiversity, arable farming, Agri-environment and climate measures

Successful Implementation of Flower Strips

The uncontrolled growth and the takeover by unwanted weedy plants in flower strips can be prevented by taking following measures:

Selecting the location: Flower strips should not be laid out in fields that are already pre-loaded with problem plants.

Selecting the seed: In principle, seed mixture and location should be matched well. Mixtures with many different species can cope better with different location- and weather conditions. Wherever possible, certified regional seed should be used.

Sowing: For perennial wild seed mixtures sowing in autumn is preferable to spring. The seedbed should be prepared in fine crumbs, comparable to sowing cereal. In case of reduced tillage without ploughs plant residues must be well incorporated in the soil. The seed should be well mixed and sown flat. The ground should be rolled after sowing to ensure contact between seeds and soil.

Early management: Some herbs develop only slowly and therefore are weak in competition. If undesired plants grow faster and threaten the development of the flower strip, a cut is recommended a few weeks after sowing. This can be repeated if necessary. The cutting height must be chosen carefully in order to cut off as much as possible of the undesired plants and not to harm the others.

Follow-up management: If undesired and problematic plants occur, they must be removed on time before flowering or developing seeds. If there are only a few plants, this should happen selectively. If possible, the cut off plant parts should be removed. If the flowering strip has to be laid out anew, this should be done in sections, in order to maintain a retreat area for wild animals.

Author(s)

Amelie Hassels (SRK)
Tanja Brüggemann (SWK)
Christine Hamon (DBV)

Contacts

a.hassels@rheinische-
kulturlandschaft.de
brueggemann@kulturland-
schaft.nrw

Country/Region

Germany

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Flower strips fulfil a number of tasks in the landscape. They are a habitat for rare plant species and provide food and coverage for animal species, like insects, birds and small mammals while enriching the appearance of a landscape.

A flowering strip tends to be also a suitable habitat for various field weeds, mainly because no pesticides are used. This can become a problem, especially when species are reproducing quickly and strongly via seed flight and roots. In extreme cases the flower strip can no longer fulfil the intended functions of being a habitat for flowering plants and a diverse range of animal species which are adapted to this habitat type.

The spread of unwanted weeds into the neighboring plots can be a problem for the production of high-quality marketable goods, which could negatively affect the acceptance of flower strips as a whole. A number of countermeasures can be taken to prevent this, which are collected in this document. The thorough planning of a flower strip is therefore important and begins even before sowing.



Top: Established flower strip © T.Brüggemann

Bottom: Preparation work © T.Brüggemann

ABOUT CONTRACTS2.0

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Contracts2.0 aims to develop innovative contract-based solutions, which increase the motivation for farmers and land managers to produce more environmental public goods and allow them to reconcile the profitability of their farms with sustainability objectives. To do so, 28 research and practice partners closely cooperate to co-design and evaluate the novel contracts. Lessons learned from successfully tested contracts will also provide support for policy makers on local, national and EU-Level.

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 contact@project-contracts20.eu

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