

## Native Meadows: Part 3

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[Part 1](#) of this series introduced native meadows and showed how homeowners can apply the landscaping principles. [Part 2](#) presented some terrific plant species for the new garden and other species to avoid. Now that the native meadow garden is in place, caring for it is easy! After planting, the watering rule of thumb is, "Once a day for a week, once a week for a month, and then once a month for a year." At most, fertilize with a little leaf-based mulch or compost. Meadow plants do not need much nutrients and can actually suffer when over-fertilized. Avoid insecticides since they defeat the purpose of attracting pollinators and maintaining host plants. Allow natural predators to keep pesky bugs in check.

After the flowers complete their blossoming cycle, either leave the seeds as bird food and winter interest or deadhead them to prevent plant propagation. During winter, the husks provide wildlife with shelter. Insects and spiders hibernate in or amongst the stalks, usually as eggs or pupa. Keep the white turtlehead stalks standing for Baltimore checkerspot larvae to overwinter. Alternatively, an autumn mowing thwarts young bushes and trees from developing, though let the clippings fall as a mulch cover. Pulling woody plants as seedlings and small saplings is a better way to preventing them from overtaking a meadow.

In the ensuing years, thin or split the specimens as needed. Many grasses and sedges benefit from a yearly division conducted in autumn. Clean, sharp shovels or garden knives cut plants neatly while minimizing excessive damage and infection susceptibility. Share the surplus plants and their seeds with your neighbors; doing so is both friendly and introduces others to wonderful native species. **Please** do not give away non-native plants. For example, the frequently shared [liriope \(\*Liriope spicata\*\)](#) pops up in natural areas with increasing frequency, lacks significant biological controls, and is already on the [National Park Service's "Alert" list](#). The best action is to replace liriope with native alternatives having similar appearance or horticultural function, such as Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*). Throwing any extra liriope away in the regular trash (not in recyclable yard waste) and sparing others from dealing with this weed is the most neighborly action you can take. Broaden your horizons and enjoy your native meadow!

For more on ideas on establishing a native meadow, visit:

<http://audubonva.org/planting-native-meadow>

<http://ferncreekdesign.org/nativemeadow.html>

<http://extension.psu.edu/natural-resources/wildlife/landscaping-for-wildlife/pa-wildlife-5>



**Figure 1. In the winter, a Virginia native meadow bestows food and shelter to wildlife while people appreciate the attractive winter forms. It truly is a garden for all seasons!**

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