



**Wildflower seeding in the desert: Learn what issues to consider in order to achieve success.**

**Issues for Consideration**

The creation of a wildflower area for a golf course situation involves vision, planning, consultation and preparation. The vision is what the superintendent and respective board members and greens committee look to accomplish with the wildflower area. It could be used to establish a feeding/nesting area for animals, add color accent to an otherwise non-descript hole or be something as simple as wanting to break up the monotony of grass, trees, sand and water. Once the vision is set, planning on what areas to do probably takes the most time. Each person has their idea of where the areas should be and how they are to look. While year round would be ideal, the life cycle for the wildflowers mostly run 4-6 months so either you have 2-3 different mixes for the seasons available or pick which period that the areas could be looking less than prime while they finish their cycle. These two are where the superintendent is most involved.

Consultations from seed suppliers, fellow superintendents and maybe local experts would be the next step. While the golf course personnel may want a look they have seen on TV or in a magazine, asking those who deal in the products or have experience in using them should be sought out for what will perform best based upon geography, weather and timing. While preparation is last, it is probably the most important. Cleaning up and removing of other plant material from the area, proper grow and kill of undesirable weed seed/plant material and amending the soil if

needed will help ensure the success of the wildflower area. Adequate water, pre/post emergent weed control, and timely fertilizer applications are inputs needed to achieve the desired outcome.

There are numerous wildflowers adaptable to the desert Southwest that can be used. While many are annuals, there are a few that will persist throughout the summer and become perennial. African daisy, desert bluebells, poppies and lupines are the most popular annuals. Scarlet flax, purple alyssum, toadflax and tidy tips are also annuals gaining in popularity. Perennials like desert marigold, gaillardia, moss verbena and coneflowers can be used to create a year round wildflower palette that can be cut back in the



African Daisies highlight the Vintage Club, Desert Course, in Indian Wells

fall to allow overseeding with an annual mix. While we couldn't call all of these "wildflowers", since they are seeded to create naturalized areas around the golf course, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

The timing for many in the desert Southwest is to have the best show correspond with a particular tournament(s). To achieve this, planting is calendar generated. An example would be the member/guest event. Private clubs view these as the big time to show off and show up their fellow clubs therefore working in the planting dates is critical for maximum color. Knowing the approximate time from planting to flowering of the different species is very helpful. That is where the seed specialist comes in. While mixtures are usually planted all at once, maturity varies greatly among them so while the mix may look great for one tournament in early April, by late April/early May it may be past its prime.

The fall months present the desert Southwest with many challenges for golf courses like overseeding but also provides numerous favorable conditions for wildflowers. Mild temperatures, light rains, good irrigation and desire to shine while many other parts of the country are getting rain and snow presents the golf courses with an opportunity to "wow" the others and provide their members/guests with enjoyable and beautiful golf.

Stover Seed's horticultural staff has had years of experience in consulting and designing seeding programs that deliver results. Give us a call to discuss what solutions we can provide to turn your course into a showcase.



**STOVER SEED.**

1415 East 6th Street • P.O. Box 21488 • Los Angeles, California 90021  
Phone: (213) 626-9668 • Toll-Free: (800) 621-0315 • Fax: (213) 626-4920  
[www.stoverseed.com](http://www.stoverseed.com)