

**MEADOW BEAUTY**  
*Rhexia mariana L.*

**Description:** An upright (up to 2.5 feet), hairy perennial that frequently spreads to form large colonies. The opposite leaves are elongated, three-nerved, with toothed margins. The pink to lavender or occasionally white flowers are produced from May to October in small clusters near the top of the plant. Each flower is 1-2 inches in diameter and contains 4 petals; the yellow to orange anthers in the center are elongated and curved downwards. The tiny tan to brownish seed are held in a reddish urn-shaped capsule.

**Uses:** This plant is used mainly for landscape beautification. It has potential for use in cultivated, garden situations, in naturalized prairie or meadow plantings, and along roadsides.

**Site adaptation:** Meadow beauty grows best in a sunny exposure. It is adapted to heavy textured and to highly organic soils. Natural stands are usually found on moist to wet sites such as in ditches, marshes, and wet meadows.

**Cultural Specifications**

**Method of establishment:** Seed or transplanted seedlings.

**Planting time:** Seed can be sown in the field from August to October. Seed is usually sown in the greenhouse or cold frame in late winter to produce transplants for spring planting.

**Seedbed preparation:** A clean, firm seedbed is essential. The site should be treated with a herbicide to control vegetation, tilled, cultipacked once or twice, and allowed to settle thoroughly before sowing.

**Planting rate and method:** Broadcast 0.5-1 gram seed per 100 square feet (0.5-1 lb/acre). The seed can be mixed with sand or rice hulls to increase volume so that it will be easier to spread uniformly over the planting site. The seed must remain on the soil surface because it is easily smothered when buried in the soil. Heavy rains after planting may cause the seed to be buried or washed from the site.

**Greenhouse production:** Seed should be sown in flats or pots in a well-drained, sterile growing medium. The seed should remain close to the surface of the growing medium; however, a thin layer of sand or sphagnum moss on top of the medium may help prevent damping-off. The seedlings should germinate within 1-2 weeks. Young plants require regular irrigation to prevent drying. Weekly applications of a soluble complete fertilizer are recommended. The seedlings are very delicate and should be transplanted in small clumps in order to disturb the roots as little as possible. Individual plants can be separated from the clump and planted in the field about six to eight weeks after transplanting. Prior to planting, seedlings should be hardened-off by placing them outdoors in a shady location for approximately one week.

**Fertilizer requirement:** Apply according to soil test recommendations. If not available, a rate of 3.5-5.5 oz per 100 square feet (100-150 lb/acre) of 13-13-13 should be applied after the seedlings are established and annually thereafter.

**Companion plants:** Meadow beauty can be grown with many grasses and wildflowers that also prefer a moist, sunny area. Some suggested companion wildflowers are clasp

coneflower, calliopsis, lyre-leaf sage, scarlet sage, cosmos, cardinal flower, ox-eye daisy, swamp sunflower, and bur marigold.

### **Management**

**Mowing:** If necessary, stands can be mowed in the spring before stem elongation begins. Later mowings should be delayed until the plants have set seed in late September to October.

**Seed production:** The capsules will become dry and brittle in early to mid October. Break open a few of the capsules to inspect the seed; if they are yellow tan to brown, then the seed is mature and ready to harvest. Seed can be collected by hand or larger areas can be harvested with a combine. Hand-collected seed can be cleaned by drying the capsules, crushing them, and screening to remove trash.

**Additional information:** Phillips, H. R. 1985. Growing and propagating wild flowers. Univ. of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

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