

## Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for October

# Born to be wild

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*Carpeted in blue lupines as far as the eye can see.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

What interested me most was the ever-changing unique landscape on this small isle bordering the Arctic Circle. I was mesmerized by the plethora of wildflowers, grasses, and moss carpeting the island. Flowers sprouted in the cracks of lava flows, spilled down the sides of volcanoes, and grew on the edges of the glaciers. While riding Icelandic horses (a small sturdy breed endemic to Iceland only) through the countryside, I saw miles and miles of blue lupines filling the fields as far as the eye could see. In the 1950s seeds from Alaskan lupines were scattered in a few regions of Iceland to help with erosion and soil improvement. They have now naturalized, much to the delight of visitors and the chagrin of the populace who have denoted lupines as invasive weeds that crowd out indigenous plants and stunt the growth

of hungry sheep. Acres of buttercups, wild perennial sweet pea, angelica, mustard, hawkweed, lady smock, Arctic sea rocket, meadowsweet, wild strawberry, gentian, Lady's mantle, marsh marigold, cornflower, yarrow, violets, and Iceland poppy hugged the ground. The dandelions grew to almost two feet tall and are harvested as a nourishing edible. Lichen and moss covered the fields of lava. The treasured Icelandic moss is said to be so delicate that a single footprint will take a hundred years to regenerate.

Autumn is an auspicious time to sow wildflower seeds in America. What makes a flower a wildflower? Basically, wildflowers grow happily without any human cultivation. They live and thrive within an interactive plant community. Many wildflowers are native to a certain region and when they freely reproduce in another area, they have naturalized.

If you'd like to introduce wildflowers into your landscape, decide on the species you want and buy seeds from a trusted company. Make sure the plants are not an invasive species. (You can always check the USDA plant database at <https://plants.usda.gov/java/>.)

Sow seeds directly into the ground or into containers. Make sure seeds are protected from winter chills and marauding birds.

Here's my list of beautiful wildflowers that will easily domesticate:

- Blackeyed Susans (*Rudbeckia*)
- Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)
- Buttercups
- California Poppy
- Columbine (*Aquilegia*)
- Coneflowers (*Echinacea*)
- Coreopsis
- Lupines
- Mustard
- Penstemons
- Wild perennial sweet pea
- Yarrow

If flowers can flourish in the extreme climate of Iceland, they will go wild in our temperate gardens. Create secret destinations that are born to be wild!

*"Wild thing,*

*You make my heart sing.*

*You make everything.*

*Groovy!*

*I think I love you." – The Troggs*



*It is said that a footprint in the Icelandic moss will take over a hundred years to regenerate.*