



Early August is meadow-cutting time for us. The Alpine Meadow has had its grass and flowers left uncut over the summer which means the height is over a metre in places. We find a reciprocating mower the best tool for the cutting job.



This leaves behind many small rows of cut herbage. It takes about a day to do the cutting, with a small team of staff and trainees taking turns on the mower so that no-one is using it for long periods. Once cut, the piles are left for a few days to dry and for any seeds to be shed.



Some areas are too steep for the mower and these, along with other areas hard to get at with the mower, are tackled with strimmers.



We remove the cut herbage as we want to keep the meadow nutrient poor which encourages native wild flowers and grasses. The heaps are raked up and loaded into trailers.



This is then taken to the arboretum where it is spread as a thick mulch around the trees. This year, we had a lot of help with the raking and removing from colleagues in other departments. As a result the whole job, which usually takes a full day, was over and done by 11am. Many hands do indeed make light work!



The cutting inevitably disturbs wildlife but wherever we can we rescue things and move them to safety.

Here are “before” and “after” views of part of the meadow:



Away from the meadow there is some summer colour to enjoy. Just outside the Alpine Display House are two raised beds and here *Silene schafta* ‘Robusta’ always puts on a good show. This is one of those well known, reliable plants that can light up an area at a time when there are few other alpiners in flower. Picture on next page ↓



In the same bed, the first of the Sternbergia has already made an appearance. This is *S. sicula* and a cultivar called 'Arcadian Sun':



Inside the Display House there are also some bulbs making an early appearance. In particular some of the *Oxalis* have started flowering. This is *Oxalis smithiana*:



Note the leaves of this species – each lobe is divided right to the base, giving the plant an open, airy feeling. Also flowering is *Oxalis stenorrhyncha* with bright terracotta-red flowers. On this species both leaves and flowers are produced atop short stalks or ‘trunks’:



Often in flower this early is *Oxalis lobata* with its intensely yellow flowers:



Finally, also in flower now is one of my favourite bulbs, *Bessera elegans*:

