



Bergamot

Do you want to start your own prairie? Visit these websites for more info:

- Wild ones: [www.for-wild.org](http://www.for-wild.org)
- Plant Conservation Alliance: [www.nps.gov/plants](http://www.nps.gov/plants)
- National Wildlife Federation: [www.nwf.org/backyard](http://www.nwf.org/backyard)
- The Prairie Enthusiasts: [www.theprairieenthusiasts.org](http://www.theprairieenthusiasts.org)

Northeast Regional Headquarters

Service Center

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Monday through Friday

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[www.dnr.wi.gov](http://www.dnr.wi.gov)

[www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/facilities/greenbldg/index.html](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/facilities/greenbldg/index.html)



# Prairie in Progress!

Native Midwestern plants: bringing back a little Wisconsin history for your viewing pleasure

DNR Northeast Regional Headquarters

Green Bay

LEED™ Gold Certified



New England aster



LEED "GOLD"

# Native Prairies



Prairie blazingstar

Parts of Southern and Southwestern Wisconsin were once home to millions of acres of tall grasses, wildflowers and scattered oak trees. In the north and east lay broad expanses of forests. However, the 1800's marked the arrival of the European settlers who turned the prairies into some of the most productive agricultural lands in the world.

<i>Approximate acres of Prairie/Savanna in Wisconsin</i>
<i>1830 7,500,000 acres</i>
<i>1994 13,500 acres</i>

Efforts are now underway to reclaim or plant new prairies, mostly on private lands, with guidance from not-for-profit organizations such as Wild Ones, The Nature Conservancy, and The Prairie Enthusiasts.

## Multipurpose Prairies

Prairies are planted for many reasons:

### Landscaping

Suburban lawns are slowly being enhanced with select patches and swaths of native plants and grasses. They complement the lawns and add color and sustainability to a neighborhood.

## Multipurpose Prairies

### Wetland restoration

When existing wetlands are destroyed by road construction, the WI Department of Transportation creates new wetlands and adds prairie plants that can tolerate a wide variety of soil moisture conditions.

### Rain gardens

Rain gardens use prairie plants to absorb excess stormwater generated by roofs, roads and parking lots. This helps minimize pollution entering rivers and lakes. At the DNR building, the large rain garden (wet mesic prairie) that is surrounded by the driveway/parking lot handles all road runoff and filters it before it reaches the retention pond.

### Attract wildlife

Native landscapes greatly increase habitat for a variety of species. The more diverse a neighborhood the more effective the laws of nature work. On the other hand, lawns and monocultures provide little food value, and no cover, nesting areas, or refuge for wildlife. Instead lawns invite diseases and turf problems that require chemicals and heavy maintenance.

### Prairies help reduce global climate impact

A conventional lawn mower pollutes as much in an hour as 40 late model cars (or as much air pollution as driving a car for 100 miles).

Each weekend, about 54 million Americans mow their lawns using 800 million gallons of gasoline per year.

Saving one gallon of gasoline eliminates 20 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. If half of us switched from lawns to prairies we would save 400 million gallons of gas and eliminate 8 BILLION pounds of carbon dioxide emissions per year.



# Prairie in Progress! DNR Northeast Regional Headquarters

When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

—Aldo Leopold

A Sand County Almanac

## The benefits of native landscapes are many!

- native landscapes thrive without fertilizers
- there's no need for routine mowing
- they adapt to any kind of rainfall (a little or a lot)
- prairies teach us about nature and our natural surroundings
- the plants provide food and habitat for wildlife
- they contribute to biodiversity
- prairie landscapes provide year-round viewing pleasure



Fawns in the north prairie July 2007

## Prairie Seasons

### Spring

Pasque flowers bloom through late snows; green shoots of junegrass and needlegrass begin poking through the previous year's litter. Violets, prairie smoke, phlox and shooting stars are among the early arrivals.

### Summer

Orange butterflyweed, purple prairie clover, yellow coneflowers, monarda, and black eyed susans color the prairie palette. Little bluestem, indian-grass, and switchgrass wave across the landscape.



Black-eyed susans

### Fall

Asters and blazing star, goldenrod and bottle gentians present the year's final show. Big bluestem towers above all. Most flowers fade and die after early frosts, and the once green grasses turn bronze, tan and gold.



Smooth blue aster

### Winter

Above ground the dead stalks and seedheads provide cover and food for small mammals and birds. Roots and rhizomes of prairie forbs, and grasses rest below the surface, ready to thrive again when warmth and moisture return in the spring.

Source: Maureen Mecozzi, A Pocket Prairie Guide, DNR-Publ. IE-187-94

## The trials and tribulations of starting a prairie!

Many of our customers have asked:

"Why don't you mow these weeds?"

"When are you going to plant a lawn?"

A suburban lawn of this size would be very labor intensive, expensive to maintain, and rather unnatural for a Department of Natural Resources property! However, planting and establishing a prairie is hard work during the first 3-4 years!

Native landscapes are sustainable and provide many benefits to humans, plants and animals.

Prairies and native landscapes started from seed can take a long time to establish; sometime several years. Invasives (plants not native to the midwest) such as Canada thistle, queen anne's lace, dandelion, ragweed, brome grass, lamb's quarters, pigweed and yes, even Kentucky bluegrass, out-compete the native plants during the early years.

The DNR's Prairie Team, made up of staff and management volunteers, work on their own time to help the native plants while they struggle to survive against the onslaught of WEEDS. Just think what it would cost to hire a lawn service to take care of a four-acre lawn!

We ask that you have patience with our "Prairie in Progress!" Our native landscape is evolving and changing over the years. Stop and take a new look every time you visit us. Do you hear more birds singing? Do you see more butterflies? Does the colorful landscape mesmerize you? In years to come, you will treasure this oasis and we bet you'll see many more like it!

## Where is DNR's Prairie in Green Bay?

The prairie (highlighted in yellow) is readily visible from Shawano Avenue and Preservation Drive as well as from all three floors of the DNR Headquarters Building.



We're reducing our global footprint with this LEED\* Gold certified building and four acres of prairie:

✓Our building uses 56% less energy than a typical commercial office building of its size and saves more than 500,000 lbs of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year (Or as much as the CO<sub>2</sub> released from 32 SUVs driving 15,000 miles per year).

✓Rather than the usual office building turf landscape, we have four acres of colorful prairie that do not have to be mowed. This saves the yearly equivalent of 216 gallons of gas, 4,320 lbs of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the value of 25 hours of mowing time (considers all petroleum and energy used in mowing, trimming, watering, and producing the fertilizers and herbicides applied to turf surfaces).

\*LEED: Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

See [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) for more info on green building