KEY TO PLANT COMMUNITIES

Plant Communities

1	**Southern Mesic Forest**	A deciduous forest dominated by the dense shade of sugar maple with a spring ephemeral ground layer and few shrubs, except along the riverbank where light intensities are higher. Other tree species include white oak, eastern hop hornbeam, poplar, cherry, basswood, and shagbark hickory. Mesic forests occur on rich soils with uniform moisture.
2	**Southern Wet Forest**	A deciduous forest found on wet soils, flood plains, and along drainage ways with fluctuating water levels. The dominant species include silver maple, black willow, American elm, green ash, and cottonwood. The wet forests are heavily invaded by box elder, buckthorn, and honeysuckle.
3	**Southern Sedge Meadow**	An open plant community on wet soils just above the water table dominated by sedges rather than grasses. The meadows also contain wetland grass species, cattails, and forbs such as asters and goldenrod. Dogwood and other shrubs often ring sedge meadows.
4	**Shrub Carr**	A tall shrub community in the intermediate stage between wet prairie and wet forest. The dominant shrubs are red osier dogwood, gray dogwood and a variety of willows. Other shrubs include raspberry, current, elderberry, and nannyberry. The understory is composed of old field grasses, Virginia creeper, poison ivy, wild cucumber, and forbs such as golden rods and asters.
5	**Aquatic**	Plant communities in unimpeded rivers are generally limited to the immediate shoreline areas. The shores of the Crawfish River are infested by reed canarygrass.
6	**Old Field**	Old agricultural fields on poorly drained soils dominated by European grasses such as quackgrass and bromegrass. These open fields are slowly becoming as shrub community as red-osier dogwood, gray dogwood, box elder, buckthorn, and honey suckle become established. The pioneering prairie species such as goldenrod are also evident.
7	**New Growth Woodland**	A wooded area of even-aged trees with many invasive species in the under story. The predominant trees include shagbark hickory, cherry red oak and box elder with buckthorn and honeysuckle in the shrub layer. Old fencerows and field edges are also in this category.
8	**River Bank Restoration Area**	A bank stabilization and re-vegetation project area for erosion control and nesting habitat. The steep, eroding banks of the Crawfish are stabilized with straw brainets and native prairie species seeded. The project is proceeding from south to north on the wet bank of the Crawfish River. Invasive species such as buckthorn and honeysuckle are prevalent on the oldest sections of the restoration.
9	**Mowed Turf**	Mowed turf and scattered black locust, green ash, and white oak.
	Wildlife Habitat	diverse plant communities support a variety of wildlife species from edge species such as deer and wild turkey to prairie and interior woodland song birds. The habitats found here include grassland, deciduous woodland, woodland edges, wetland and riverine. Typical southern Wisconsin wildlife species are found at Aztalan State Park, no endangered species have been listed. A complete species inventory is given in the master plan document.

CONNECTIONS TO THE PAST

- At the time of the Mississippian habitation of Aztalan, oak openings or savanna covered much of the site on the west side of the Crawfish River. This plant community of widely scattered large oaks and groundcover of prairie plants would have been much easier to clear during the construction of the village than the denser oak woodlands growing on the east side of the Crawfish. Fire tolerant oaks survived the prairie fires which swept in with the prevailing westerly winds. The natural firebreak created by the river stopped the fire from spreading to the east. The denser oak and maple woods, which we see on the east bank today, flourished where fire was impeded.
- It is interesting to note that many of the plant communities listed on this plan contain plants that were eaten or used by the inhabitants of Aztalan. Among many other plants, they would have found strawberries in the Southern Sedge Meadows, cranberries in nearby woody swamps, and hackberry, maple, jack-in-the-pulpit, and hazelnut in the Southern Mesic Forest.
- On this site and nearby were diverse groupings of plant communities. This diversity produced varied **plant and animal associations** that were exploited by the inhabitants. They would have found elk, bison, white-tailed deer, squirrel, woodchucks, porcupine and other game.

VEGETATION & WILDLIFE HABITAT

Aztalan State Park

State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Dana White Quam, Park Manager

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Date: [illegible]
Scale: 1" = 200'-0"
Drawn By: [illegible]
Job No.:

Jennings and Associates Landscape Architecture
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