DISCOVER PRAIRIE PLANTS

Following are some of the plants that were found in the prairies of Ohio when European settlers arrived and have now been reintroduced into Five Rivers MetroParks prairie areas. How many can you find?

As you discover these plants, notice some of their special adaptations that have allowed them to survive the stress of the hot summer sun. Many prairie plants have finely divided or slender leaves that improve air circulation, lower air temperature and decrease evaporation. Others have leaves that are close to the ground so only their flowers are raised into the drying winds. Some prairie plants rely on thick, tough leaves and stems to prevent loss of moisture, or on fuzzy or hairy leaves to hold moisture and reflect sunlight. These adaptations, along with others like a deep root system and ability to withstand fire, have allowed prairie plants to survive under harsh natural conditions.

FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS™

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MEET OUR

PRAIRIE PLANTS

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THE PRAIRIES OF OHIO

At the time of pioneer settlement, more than 300 natural prairie areas existed in Ohio. Most were small, but some spread into several townships.

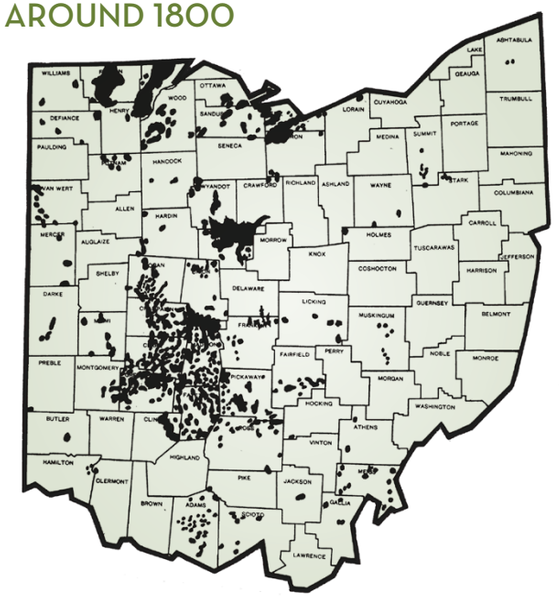
The prairies of Ohio were for the most part tall-grass prairies with vegetation sometimes reaching heights of ten feet. They were dominated by such grasses as big bluestem, Indian grass, little bluestem and switch-grass. A variety of other sun-loving, deep-rooted plants grew among the grasses. These plants reached their flowering peak in mid-to-late summer.

No one knows when prairies first developed in the state. They may have existed in unglaciated Ohio before or between glacial advances. Following Ohio's last glaciation, the climate became warmer and drier. This trend continued until, about 4,000 years ago, semi-arid conditions prevailed in Ohio and western prairies expanded eastward into the state. In time, the climate changed and became more humid. The humid conditions allowed forests to return and reclaim much of Ohio. By the late 1700s, Ohio's continuous prairie had become isolated pockets in extremely wet or dry areas where prairie plants could compete successfully with forest vegetation.

Ohio's prairies survived the early pioneer times. Because they lacked trees, their soils were thought to be infertile and unfit for farming. Eventually, plows did turn the rich prairie soil and many of Ohio's native plants disappeared forever.

Five Rivers MetroParks is now bringing back prairie plants as part of its land stewardship program, which is aimed at developing and maintaining a diversity of natural habitats. Prairie vegetation is being planted in former farmland. To prevent woody plants from taking over, the prairie areas are periodically mowed or burned. Burning does not harm the deep-rooted prairie plants, but does inhibit tree seedlings and shrubs.

PRAIRIES OF OHIO AROUND 1800



Controlled Prairie Burn at Possum Creek MetroPark

WILDFLOWERS FOUND IN METROPARKS' PRAIRIE AREAS

Stiff Goldenrod
Oligoneuron rigida

BLOOM TIME:
September to early October

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
native bees, Monarch butterflies

Royal Catchfly
Silene regia

BLOOM TIME:
July - August

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
hummingbirds

Prairie Dock
Silphium terebinthinaceum

BLOOM TIME:
July - August

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
bumble bees and native bees

Dense Blazing Star
Liatris spicata

BLOOM TIME:
July - August

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies and bumble bees

Purple Coneflower
Echinacea purpurea

BLOOM TIME:
June - August

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies and hummingbirds

Northern Blazing Star
Liatris scariosa

BLOOM TIME:
September - October

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
native bees

Fringeleaf Wild Petunia *Ruellia humilis*

BLOOM TIME:
June - July

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies

Big Bluestem
Andropogon gerardii

BLOOM TIME:
June - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
skippers

Pinnate Coneflower
Ratibida pinnata

BLOOM TIME:
July - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies and native bees

Little Bluestem
Schizachyrium scoparium

BLOOM TIME:
August to early October

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
native bees, Monarch butterflies

Whorled Rosinweed
Silphium trifoliatum

BLOOM TIME:
July - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
native bees

Indian Grass
Sorghastrum nutans

BLOOM TIME:
June - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
bees, Monarch butterflies

Prairie Cordgrass
Spartina pectinata

BLOOM TIME:
August - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
cover for birds

Butterfly Milkweed
Asclepias tuberosa

BLOOM TIME:
June

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
Monarchs and other butterflies

Virginia Mountain Mint *Pycnanthemum virginianum*

BLOOM TIME:
August - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies and bees

Wild Senna
Senna hebecarpa

BLOOM TIME:
July - August

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
hummingbirds

Jerusalem Artichoke
Helianthus tuberosus

BLOOM TIME:
September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies, bees and hummingbirds

Wild Bergamot
Monarda fistulosa

BLOOM TIME:
June - August

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterlies, bees and hummingbirds

Deertongue Panicgrass
Dichanthelium clandestinum

BLOOM TIME:
August - October

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
bees and butterflies

Sweet Everlasting
Pseudognaphalium obtusifolium

BLOOM TIME:
July - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies

New England Aster
Symphyotrichum novae-angliae

BLOOM TIME:
August - September

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
bees and butterflies

Indian Hemp
Apocynum cannabinum

BLOOM TIME:
July - September

Biennial Gaura
Gaura biennis

BLOOM TIME:
July - October

Black Eyed Susan
Rudbeckia hirta

BLOOM TIME:
July - August

VALUE TO POLLINATORS:
butterflies and bees