

Prairie Dock

Flowers: Yellow
Blooms: Summer-fall

This plant's slender flowering stalks can grow up to 10 feet tall, helping it reach over other tall prairie plants. The large broad leaves feel like sandpaper.



Compass Plant

Flowers: Yellow
Blooms: Late spring-summer

The flowers bloom on sturdy stems 6-12 feet tall! The leaves are rough and heavily lobed. This plant is named for its ability to orient its leaves along a north-south axis to avoid the hot midday sun.



Cup Plant

Flowers: Yellow
Blooms: Summer-fall

Cup plants can grow 4-10 feet tall. Birds often drink water from the 'cups' formed by the leaves where they wrap around the stem. The stems of this plant are square!



Cream Gentian

Flowers: Whitish
Blooms: Late summer

At only 1-2 feet tall, this plant is a relatively short prairie plant. Bumblebees are the main pollinators of the flowers.



Common Milkweed

Flowers: Pink
Blooms: Late spring-summer

At only 1-2 feet tall, this plant is a relatively short prairie plant. Bumblebees are the main pollinators of the flowers.



Foxglove Beard Tongue

Flowers: White
Blooms: Late spring-midsummer

This plant grows up to 3 feet tall, and is part of the Snapdragon family. The flowers are 1 inch long.



Goldenrod

Flowers: Yellow
Blooms: Summer-fall

There are over 10 species of goldenrods in Illinois. Because many bloom at the same time as ragweed, they are often incorrectly blamed for hay fever.



History of Buffalo Trace Prairie

Bison herds followed well-worn trails, called traces, as they migrated through the prairie. These traces were also used by humans to travel, and some later became permanent roads. Interstate 74 follows approximately the same path as an old bison migration route.

This land was purchased by the Champaign County Forest Preserve District in 1976. The reconstructed prairie that is now here provides important habitat for the unique plants and animals of the tallgrass prairie. It is also part of our Illinois natural heritage.

When the first settlers arrived in Illinois, more than 60% of Illinois, over 22 million acres, was prairie! Currently, less than 0.01% (just over 2,000 acres) of original prairie remains.

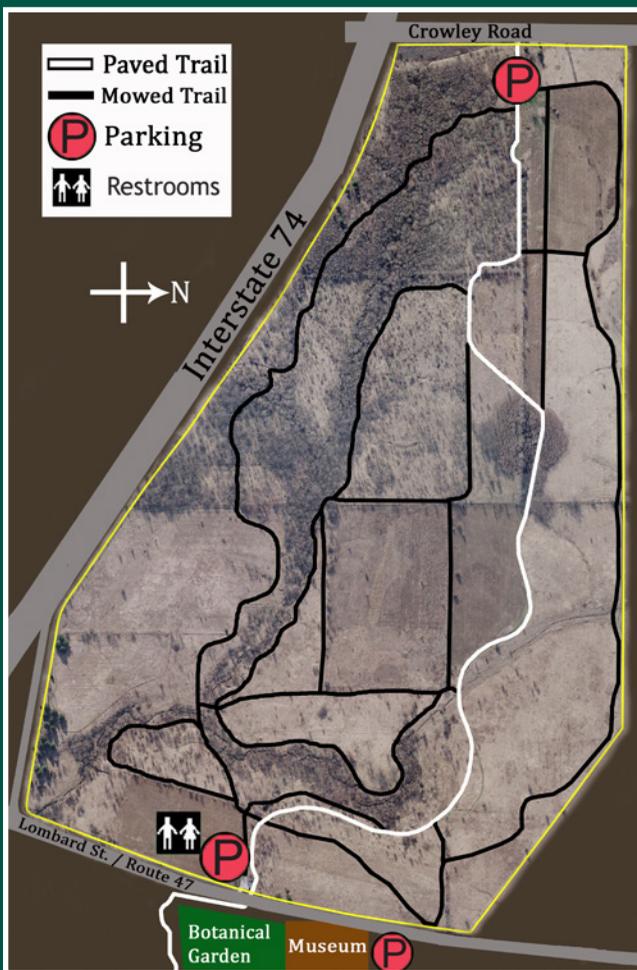
The prairie must be actively managed through invasive species removal and prescribed fire to remain viable. The tallgrass prairie ecosystem is adapted to, and depends on fire, to remain healthy. You may see evidence of prescribed fire in late fall and winter.

BUFFALO TRACE PRAIRIE

SUMMER WILDFLOWER GUIDE



Trail Map



Welcome!

East-central Illinois was once home to a vast tallgrass prairie ecosystem. The deep roots of prairie plants (up to 15 feet deep!) built the rich soil of this region, which has some of the richest soil in the world. Many prairie plants can live for many decades, some even up to 100 years!

We hope you enjoy these unique tallgrass prairie plants as you hike!

Purple Coneflower

Flowers: Pink
Blooms: Late spring-fall

Also known as Echinacea, parts of this plant are used as an herbal remedy to treat colds and boost immunity.



Wild Bergamot

Flowers: Pink-purple
Blooms: Late spring-fall

Also known as "bee balm" because the leaves of this plant are said to relieve bee stings if chewed and put on the sting site. It is also used in herbal teas.



Blazing Star

Flowers: Pink-purple
Blooms: Midsummer-fall

Its flowers grow in a dense spike at the top of the plant and can reach 5 feet in height. Cultivars of this species are commonly grown in flower gardens.



Wild Quinine

Flowers: White
Blooms: Late spring-summer

Also known as "feverfew," this plant has been used for centuries to treat fevers. Its dense, flat-topped flowers have a texture similar to cauliflower.



Gray-headed Coneflower

Flowers: Yellow
Blooms: Late spring-fall

The petals of this flower droop down from the center. The flowers boom on flexible stalks up to 4 feet tall. The dry seedheads are fragrant when crushed.



White Wild Indigo

Flowers: White
Blooms: Late spring-midsummer

The flowering stalks can be up to 6 feet tall. This plant is important in prairie habitats because it adds nitrogen to the soil.



Rattlesnake Master

Flowers: White
Blooms: Summer

The leaves of this plant resemble yucca. It was once thought to be an antidote for snake bites. Fibers in the leaves were used by Native Americans to make rope.



Tall Coreopsis

Flowers: Yellow
Blooms: Summer-early fall

This plant's slender flowering stalks can grow 2-8 feet tall.



Big Bluestem

Flowers: Tiny, in long dense clusters
Blooms: Summer

This is the state grass of Illinois. It averages 3-6 feet tall but can grow 9 feet tall! It is also called "turkey-foot" because the flower heads resemble turkey toes.



Indian Grass

Flowers: Tiny, in feather-like clusters
Blooms: Summer-fall

Flowering stems are 7 feet tall. The flower heads are first reddish-brown, and then fade to grayish-brown.



New England Aster

Flowers: Purple
Blooms: Late summer-fall

This attractive plant can grow to be 4 feet tall, and is widely cultivated. The leaves provide food for many types of caterpillars.



Sneezeweed

Flowers: Yellow
Blooms: Midsummer-fall

This plant grows up to 5 feet tall. Dried flowerheads were once used as snuff by pioneers.

