
A Prairie Rendezvous



SPRING VOL. 16, NO. 1, 2014
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Special: "What to plant this spring" issue (and "what to avoid")

Sedges: Ignored & Under-appreciated

By Paul B. Marcum

Sedges, members of the Cyperaceae Family, are among the most common plants of the Illinois landscape. Robert Mohlenbrock's 2014 edition of the *Vascular Flora of Illinois* documents the Cyperaceae Family as the third largest in Illinois (291 species), following only the Asteraceae (Sunflower Family; 387 species) and Poaceae (Grass Family; 356 species).

Carex is represented by 193 species. Because of the tremendous diversity, you can find sedges of different sizes, colors, textures, shapes and growth forms — ready to fill any niche you might have in your home landscape.

Carex is the largest genus in the sedge family, and for that matter the largest genus in Illinois. Most *Carex* sedges are evergreen and therefore provide interest during our bleakest times of the year.

Sedges are found in all habitats. Whether the site is wet or dry, a forest or grassland, sedges are common or even dominant parts of all of our Il-
(continued on page 4)

GPF Plant Sale Sedges

GPF might offer these and other sedges at the annual spring plant sale.

Carex jamesii, James' Sedge. 20%-100% shade, mesic. 12". Forms small tight clump often mistaken for lawn grass. Prairie remnants are already relatively common through some of the older neighborhoods of C-U.



James' Sedge remnant in Urbana lawn landscape
Photo by Gary Cziko

Carex grayi, Common Bur Sedge. Sun or shade, prefers some wetness. Good for rain gardens. 3' tall with striking seed head May to October. For cut or dried floral arrangements.

Carex brachyglossa, Small Yellow Fox Sedge. Full sun and any prairie context, but prefers moist. 3' tall. Golden spike seedhead.

Carex pensylvanica, Pennsylvania Sedge. Sun or shade, mesic context. 8" tall. Golden head in April-May. Often works for seldom/never mowed lawns.

Choosing Pollinator Friendly Plants

One of the primary strategies for promoting the conservation and health of pollinators is to grow a variety of plants that flower at different times and have different flower shapes and colors. Plants with skippy blooms should be planted in clumps.

The two pollinators of most interest to many people are butterflies, such as the monarch, and bees.

With those two things in mind, the following list of plants offers information about the bloom

color and period. It also lists what kind of pollinators are attracted to the plant: **Bees**, **Butterflies**, **B&B** (bees and butterflies) as well as **B&B+** (bees, butterflies, and other pollinators, often hummingbirds). The plants are listed in the order in which they bloom.

The "spp." notation means that various species of the genus are covered by that entry, which may also offer the common name of individual species.

(continued on page 3)

A Prairie Rendezvous

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A *Prairie Rendezvous* is a publication of Grand Prairie Friends for the restoration community of East Central Illinois.

A *Prairie Rendezvous* is published quarterly. Article submissions should be sent electronically to the editor at jimfay7@gmail.com or by mail to the P.O. Box address given above. Member submissions are gladly welcomed.

Grand Prairie Friends is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to natural community preservation, restoration, and education in East Central Illinois. Our stewards help coordinate volunteer workdays at native prairie, savanna, wetland, and woodland remnants. Inquiries and tax-deductible donations should be sent to the P.O. Box listed above

GPF mission is to preserve and restore natural communities in east-central Illinois and promote an understanding and appreciation of natural resources.

Stay in touch with the GPF community through the website (www.grandprairiefriends.org), facebook (www.facebook.com/grandprairiefriends) or the ecostewards e-mail list (lists.communitylists.org/listinfo.cgi/ecostewards-communitylists.org).

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Board meetings are regularly scheduled for the fourth Monday of each month (except August and December) at 5:30 PM in the I-Building (1816 S. Oak St., Champaign)

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For information on volunteering and getting involved with any committees, please contact the following:

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Submission Deadlines

- Summer Issue (June, July, Aug.): May 1
- Fall Issue (Sept., Oct., Nov.): Aug. 1
- Winter Issue (Dec., Jan. 2014, Feb. 2014): Nov. 1
- Spring Issue (Mar., Apr., May): Feb. 1

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

FEBRUARY 2014

by Jamie Ellis, President, GPF

Wow, winter's grip is strong on central Illinois and across the Midwest as I write.

Above average snowfall and below average temperatures make for tough living for us as well as the plants and critters we deeply care about. With the recent weather conditions, what's one to think about these events in relation to global climate change? Based on what I've read—get used to it. Weather conditions ain't gonna be what they used to be!

It might seem like a slow time of year for GPF and natural areas stewardship, but your Board and I have stayed busy.

I sincerely thank Ansel Anderson, Terry Rathgeber, Jim and Meredith Fay, and summer intern Will Wright for helping to put together our end-of-year membership appeal mailing. And more importantly, I thank everyone who has responded generously with membership checks and other donations.

Gail Snowdon, Jim Payne, and I made progress on drafting a Records Policy which comes before the Board soon. I know—boring stuff. But these important documents help guide GPF now and into the future so we won't be fumbling over where or how to store important conservation documents and other records.

Work is being accomplished at Shortline Prairie: Will Wright and his father spent the better part of three days clearing weedy mulberry and cherry trees in early January. Neighbor and GPF members Jacob Pruiett will continue to work on removing trees to help the remnant prairie thrive!

I finished compiling hours for the 2013 summer interns. Will and Joe put in about 700 hours in natural areas stewardship work and education! I
(continued on page 5)

(CHOOSING POLLINATOR FRIENDLY PLANTS...)

Baptisia bracteata, longbract wild indigo. Blue-purple. March-June. **Bees**.

Phlox spp., Pink-purple-white. March-June. **B&B+**.

Anemone spp. anemone, thimbleweed. White. March-June. **Butterflies**.

Aquilegia canadensis, wild columbine. Red/yellow. April-July. **B&B+**.

Monarda spp. bee-balm, wild bergamot, horsemint. White/yellow/pink/purple. April-Sept. **B&B+**.

Ceanothus americanus, New Jersey tea. White. May-Sep. **Bees**.

Coreopsis spp., tickseed. Yellow. May-Sept. **B&B**.

Asteracea (Aster family), sunflower, black-eyed susan, goldenrod. Yellow. May-Oct. **B&B**.

Viola spp., violets. Blue. May-June. **B&B**.

Asclepias syriaca, common milkweed. Pale purple. May-August. **Butterflies**.

Penstemon spp., beardtongue. White/pink. May-August. **B&B+**.

Asclepias tuberosa, butterfly weed. Yellow/orange. May-July. **Butterflies**.

Asclepias sullivantii, prairie milkweed. Pink. June-August. **Butterflies**.

Asclepias incarnata, swamp milkweed. Reddish/pink. June-Oct. **B&B+**.

Dalea spp., prairie clover. White/purple. June-Sept. **Bees**.

Amorpha canescens, leadplant. Purple. June-July **Bees**.

Echinacea purpurea, purple coneflower. Rose-purple. June-August. **B&B+**.

Eupatorium spp., Joe-Pye weed, boneset. Pink/purple/white. July-Oct. **B&B**.

Lobelia spp., cardinal flower. Red/blue/violet. July-Oct. **B&B+**.

Vernonia spp., ironweed. Pink/purple. July-Oct. **B&B**.

Silphium spp., prairie-dock, compass plant, rosinweed. Yellow. July-Sept. **Bees**.

Gentiana spp. gentian. White/blue/purple. August-Oct. **Bees**.

Liatris spp., blazing star. Pink/purple. August-Oct. **B&B**.

Another strategy for conserving pollinators is to provide a variety of diverse habitats for nesting sites: a diversity of forbs, shrubs, and trees. Some nest in thick mulch; some, like the clean ground. Some need shelter from bright nighttime lights so common in many urban environments.

Note: the plant list information was adapted from: <http://pollinator.org/PDFs/Guides/PrairieParklandrx12FINAL.pdf>.

*Thinking about what tree to set out?***Don't Choose Callery Pear**

Sandy Mason, in her "Homeowners Column," put the Callery pear tree in her "what was I thinking?" category, along with Spandex and skydiving.

Callery pear presents a very invasive problem. Indeed, in 2005 a cultivar of the Callery pear was named "Tree of the Year" by an arborist magazine and the U.S. Forest Service named Callery pear "Weed of the Week."

Many arborists, nursery operators and landscapers vigorously promote the tree because it is a commercial gold mine: cheap and easy to propagate, disease-free, adaptable to about any habitat, pleasant silhouette, short life expectancy. And, of course, there's the impressive spring bloom.

But after only for a few years, as few as five to seven in many cases, the "what was I thinking?" reality sets in. That spring bloom? It lasts only about a week or maybe two. And the pleasant silhouette may also be short-lived.

The tree structure is weak, often requiring frequent pruning and maintenance, to keep branches from breaking off. This often compromises the attractive silhouette. And even then, especially after a bout of wind or ice or snow, such maintenance may be in vain, and the tree, or what's left of it, must be removed.

Other problems with the tree are also significant. Its smell has been described as that of rotting fish. Unless placed well away from potential problems the low branches assault pedestrians or vehicles, and the shallow roots crack sidewalks and patios, if not foundations. The deep shade caused by the low profile of the tree may eliminate other lawn and garden plants.

Though each individual variety of Callery pear was once sterile, today both cultivated and naturalized varieties produce abundant fertile seed which is dispersed by birds and small mammals.

Regardless of the promotion by commercial interests, reality is taking its toll. The *New York Times* says the number of Callery pear managed by the New York City Parks Department is estimated to be only half of what it was in 2006. Champaign Co. Forest Preserve has been systematically removing Callery pear from its natural areas. Many communities are no longer using or recommending Callery pear, City of Champaign, for example.

The bottom line, and probably most significant characteristic of the tree, is that it is a very invasive problem. Don't plant it.

(*SEDGES: IGNORED & ...*)

Illinois native plant communities. Despite this fact, they remain a mystery to many and, along with members of the genus *Juncus* (rushes; Juncaceae Family), they are often mistakenly sold as and called grasses. Remember the following rhyme to identify these major groups:

Sedges have edges, rushes are round,

Grasses have nodes all the way to the ground.

Identification to species level often requires magnification as well as some knowledge of specialized botanical terminology. Perigynium, the sac-like structure that surrounds the female flowers, for example is one thing that all *Carex* sedges have in common. While it is beyond the goals of this article to teach sedge identification, it is my hope that this will provide a starting point for those wishing to use sedges and specifically *Carex* sedges in their home landscape.

Although sedge flowers have a reduced structure, having only the essential parts required for reproduction, they can be, and often are, very interesting and even attractive. The foliage, however, is what most often makes *Carex* sedges attractive as landscape plants.

With the increased availability of native seed, recent restorations have become more biologically diverse. Hopefully they more closely resemble our scattered natural remnants. Because of the increased interest in natural community restoration, sedge seed is now available from many local/regional vendors, however, planting plugs or small plants is often the preferred method of sedge establishment.

Commonly used species in Illinois wetlands and rain gar-

dens include *Carex comosa* (bottlebrush sedge), *Carex crinita* (fringed sedge), *Carex lupulina* (hop sedge), *Carex muskingumensis* (palm sedge), *Carex stricta* (tussock sedge), and *Carex grayi* (Gray's sedge).



Carex grayi, one of the most common and recognizable sedge species in Illinois.

Carex bicknellii (Bicknell's or prairie sedge), *Carex brachyglossa* (yellow fox sedge), *Carex brevior* (plains oval sedge) and *Carex molesta* (field oval sedge) are often used in grassland sites.



Carex brachyglossa

Many of our woodland species are excellent additions to the home landscape, especially

in areas too shaded for most horticultural favorites. Leaf coloration, texture and length vary considerably. *Carex platyphylla* (broad-leaved sedge), for example, has very wide leaves that are a beautiful glaucous-blue color. Other species like *Carex communis* (common beech sedge), *Carex digitalis* (narrow-leaved wood sedge) and *Carex jamesii* (James' or lawn sedge) have narrower leaves that radiate out in a pendulous fashion.

Lastly, a recent trend in using sedges in the home landscape is as a sedge lawn. A number of *Carex* species are low growing, patch-forming species that are easy to maintain as an irregularly or never mowed lawn. Once established, these sedge lawns require less maintenance and upkeep compared to conventional European lawn grasses. Native Illinois species that fit this bill include *Carex pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania sedge) and *Carex texensis* (Texas bracted sedge).



Carex pensylvanica

Hopefully this article will inspire some readers to use *Carex* sedges in their home landscape, and hopefully they will begin to appreciate the great diversity in the genus for their understated, if not hidden beauty.

(President's Report...)

needed information in preparation to write a final grant report for an Illinois Wildlife Preservation Grant GPF received last year. (\$2,000 thanks to the IDNR.) We are accepting applications for the 2014 now!

Ansel Anderson, Fred Delcomyn, and I attended a Volunteer Stewardship Network (VSN) Network for Nature meeting on December 10 at the Izaak Walton League cabin near Mahomet.

This was a meeting of conservation group and agency representatives from across central Illinois led by Karen Tharp who works for The Nature Conservancy. Ms. Tharp made presentations on ways to better connect and communicate with volunteer stewards., and it was an important time for GPF to connect with other groups in central Illinois doing similar conservation work.

Another thing that's been on my plate as well as that of your Board is Terrafirma. Through this new entity, called Terrafirma, GPF is able to purchase conservation insurance that will essentially help cover legal costs if we have to defend any of the properties that we own from violations to any conservation easements or covenants on those properties. We don't expect problems in the foreseeable future, but this should be good insurance for GPF to have.

I am looking forward to two meetings coming up soon—the annual Steward's Luncheon on February 15 and the annual Winter Membership Meeting on March 7. The Steward's Luncheon is a place for natural areas stewards to gather and share ideas as well as a way for us to say Thank You for all the hard work they do. The Winter Meeting will feature GPF member Mary Kay Solecki who will talk about 50 years of conservation through the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

You wouldn't know it by the snow and ice on the ground now, but spring is around the corner. GPF is gearing up for the spring plant sale to be held on May 10 this year! Volunteers will be planting seeds soon. We have a really great group of people who have come together to make the sale a success including Ed and Diane Wilhite, Jim Fay, Beth Wohlgemuth, Rob Stanton, Rhonda Jurinak, Gary Russell, and others. Come on out and get your hands dirty with us this spring and then take some plants home for you own garden. Tell your friends!

Invasive Plant Task Force holds annual certification & training

The Invasive Plant Task Force kicked off the New Year by welcoming 30 participants to the annual Volunteer Herbicide Certification. Veteran certification workshop leaders Mike Daab, CCFPD, and Mike Davis, UPD, were once again in play. This year John Griesbaum, Manager of Natural Areas for Allerton Park participated and John Hott, Supervisor of Land Management at Kickapoo State Park was a valuable contributor.

This expansion allows certified volunteers to apply herbicide at more natural areas than in the previous two years of certification.

This year Master Naturalists and Stewards had also asked for a segment on chainsaw usage, maintenance, and safety. Even if a steward or volunteer never expects to operate a chainsaw, it is crucial to know how to handle oneself around it.

The participants could not have had a better leader for this segment than Austin Haskett. In addition to being a senior (and heading to graduate school) at UI's Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Sciences, Austin is certified in Wildland Fire Chainsaws.

This certification requires nearly 40 hours of training. The program was developed by an interagency group of subject matter experts led by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.



John Griesbaum stands ready to demonstrate chainsaw maintenance

On the land conservation side of things, there looks to be some important land acquisition opportunities for GPF this year, and I will tell you all about them when details are finalized. Stay tuned.

Until we meet again please stay in touch—through this newsletter, email (james.ellis72@gmail.com, [ecostewards email list](#), or [facebook](#)).

Stay warm,

Jamie Ellis
February 1, 2014

Choosing prairie plants?

Some Prairie Stalwarts

Here's a list of stalwart prairie plants for anything from prairie restoration to urban landscaping. All are easy-to-care-for perennials that do well in an average sunny environment.

Forbs

Aster novae-angliae, New England Aster. To 5' tall; purple flower blooms Aug.-Oct. Great nectar source for bees and butterflies.

Coreopsis tripteris, tall coreopsis. To 8' tall; yellow flower blooms July-Sep.

Echinacea purpurea, purple coneflower. 2'-4' tall, blooms June-Oct. An ornamental, flower garden standby for about any context including semi-shade.

Heliopsis helianthoides, false sunflower, or ox-eye. 2'-5' tall, yellow flower blooms that seem to last and last. July-Sept.

Liatris pycnostachya, prairie blazing-star. 2'-4' tall, dense spike of purple flowers bloom July-Sept.

Monarda fistulosa, bee balm or wild bergamot. 2'-4' tall; pale purple flowers July-Sept. Bumblebees love it.

Parthenium integrifolium, wild quinine. About 3' tall; white bloom July-Sep.

Penstemon digitalis, foxglove beard-tongue. 1'-4' tall; blooms May-July.

Ratibida pinnata, yellow coneflower. 1½- 4' tall; drooping yellow bloom June-Aug.

Silphium integrifolium, prairie rosinweed. 2'-6' tall; yellow bloom July-Sep.

Solidago speciosa, showy goldenrod. To 5' tall; bloom a 10" dense conical cluster of yellow flowers in Aug.-Oct.

Tradescantia ohiensis, spiderword To 3' tall; blue to pink flowers in May-June.

Grasses

Elymus canadensis, Canada wild-rye. 4'-5' tall; blooms July-Aug.; a good early colonizer.

Schizachyrium scoparium, little blue stem. To 3' tall; blooms Aug.-Oct. Wonderful fall color of golden-brown to bronze.

Sorghastrum nutans, Indian grass. 5'-7' tall. Heavy golden bloom/seedhead Aug.-Sept.; erect plant coexists well with other plants.

And don't forget

Silphium terebinthinaceum, prairie-dock. Flowering stem to 12' tall. Huge basal leaves and small yellow flowers on long stalk July-Sep. A very impressive plant for that special place where a landscape blockbuster is appropriate – next to the driveway and sidewalk, or in the centerpiece of any garden bed.

Passenger Pigeons

2014: Centennial of a Species' Passing

Pam Leiter

As large as a pileated woodpecker, but sleeker, the passenger pigeon was built for speed, grace and maneuverability...earning the nickname 'blue meteor.' In the mid-1800s an estimated 3-5 billion birds wandered the eastern half of the United States in huge flocks, finding and descending upon localized abundant masts of beechnuts and acorns to fuel their massive numbers.

The story of the passenger pigeon is a story of people, birds, and the American landscape. It incorporates culture, technology, economics, politics and, of

course, natural resources. Even after 100 years the story of the passenger pigeon can still inform today's conservation challenges ... and even its successes.

This year marks the 100-year anniversary of the species' passing. The last individual, known as Martha, passed away in the Cincinnati Zoo on Sept 1, 1914.

To learn more:

- A special exhibit opens on Saturday April 5, at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center



- passengerpigeon.org
- New book: *A Feathered River Across the Sky*, by Joel Greenburg

The Monarch/Milkweed Conundrum

Jim Fay

Milkweed plays a unique and essential role in the life of the highly treasured monarch butterfly. That plant is the only food of the larva of that butterfly, the only place the butterfly will lay its eggs. And the most common milkweed, and the one most preferred by the Monarch, is (surprise!) the common milkweed or *Asclepias syriaca*.

And yet the common milkweed has traditionally been considered a very bothersome weed, and with good reason. It is a very aggressive rhizomatous plant. In the days before glyphosate (Roundup®), the usual way to try to control it was with the hoe or plow. And those efforts, as often as not, only spread the rhizomes and therefore, the plant.

It is true that glyphosate has greatly lessened the milkweed problem. But the UofI Crop Science Department still considers it a weed. USDA lists

it as an invasive or noxious plant. Any farmers or gardeners who have fought the milkweed battle in the past may not be very happy with anyone who plants common milkweed next to their garden or field. This discontent does not apply to other less aggressive milkweeds such as butterfly weed, Sulivant's milkweed, or swamp milkweed.

Prairie Moon Nursery gives out free packets of common milkweed seed, and yet their website offers the caution that "it is also aggressive and therefore may not be suitable for small landscape plantings."

A simple solution to this conundrum, one highly appreciated by both monarchs and neighbors, is to deadhead the plant. This will prolong the bloom time for the monarchs and, if done at the end of the blooming season, eliminate seed heads and aggressive spread of the plant for the neighbors.

Global Positioning Systems

Stacey Clementz,

Education Program Specialist,
Champaign County Forest Preserve District

Handheld Global Positioning System or GPS units are becoming increasingly popular among environmentalists and outdoors people in general. And rightfully so. For example, if you find a rare plant – or an infestation of invasives – that you would like others to be able to locate you can use a GPS unit to determine the longitude and latitude of the plant and "mark" its location. You can also save this information directly to the GPS unit.

At the Homer Lake Interpretive Center we use the Garmin eTrex10. I did a lot of research on the perfect GPS unit to use with first time users, both children and adults. It was recommended to me by Ed Gorny, GIS trainer in Illinois, to buy the Garmin eTrex10 because of its ease of use and its low price.

There are many different types of GPS units out there, so it is very important to do your research. If you own a smartphone you already have access to GPS. You can download applications to seek out coordinates or to mark them. I use a program on my iPhone called MotionX-GPS that is very simple and cheap to use.

GPS technology was originally developed in the 1960s and was intended solely for military applications, but in the 1980s the government

made the system available for civilian use. GPS units did not become popular with the public until the early 2000s when the government eliminated a project where they scrambled satellite signals.

This made the tracking system of a personal GPS unit go from an area the size of a football field to nine feet. Because of this accuracy, GPS units are now used for many things: cell phones, hiking, emergency location in cars, boating, fishing, scouting and geocaching. These devices are a good way to find your car in the shopping center parking lot.

I personally have been using GPS units on and off for ten years. I mainly use them for geocaching - an outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS units. You are given a set of GPS coordinates (longitude and latitude) and then attempt to find the geocache container hidden at that location.

Today, there are over 2 million geocaches in the United States.

If you are interested in trying out a GPS unit visit the Homer Lake Interpretive Center at the Homer Lake Forest Preserve in Homer, IL. You can check a GPS unit out for the day and try to find several geocaches at the preserve. For more information call 217-896-2455.





Thank You!

Grand Prairie Friends sincerely thanks everyone who responded to the call to renew their membership in late 2013 and early 2014. Monetary donations by these generous donors are what it takes to carry out GPF's conservation mission.

Michael Adsit	David Andsager
Bryant Barnes	Timothy Bartlett
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Life Members

Grand Prairie Friends sincerely thanks those who made a commitment and investment in the organization with their life membership. Life members make a one-time contribution of \$500 which goes into an endowment to fund the maintenance of the organization. The GPF Board is contemplating a proposal to raise the Life Membership contribution to \$1000 effective in 2015.

Anonymous
 Ansel Anderson
 Annette & John Buckmaster
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 Dan Coffin & Ruth Green
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SUMMER 2014 INTERNSHIP

Sponsored by
GRAND PRAIRIE FRIENDS

Position: Grand Prairie Friends (GPF) seeks interested applicants for two full-time summer internship positions for summer 2014 in ecological stewardship and management of natural areas in east-central Illinois. Interns will work independently and as a team to control and remove exotic, invasives from prairie and woodland natural areas using mechanical and chemical techniques.

Educational opportunities include outings in the field with natural resource professionals, scientists, and volunteers. Interns might also assist with planting native plant seedlings and collecting native plant seed. A truck is provided for transportation to and from sites.

Qualifications: Applicants should be highly self-motivated and able to work with little or no direct supervision. Applicants must be willing and able to work in the field under a variety of environmental conditions.

Completed college level course work in the biological and ecological sciences is preferred. Ability or willingness to operate hand and power tools including bow saws, clippers, power brush-cutter, chainsaw, etc. is also preferred. A pesticide applicator license will be required at the start of the internship. A valid automobile driver's license is required.

Rate: \$9.00/hr begins on or about May 15 and will continue to approximately August 31 (start and end times are flexible).

To ensure full consideration for the internship, applications should be received by **March 15, 2013**. Please send letter of application, resume, and contact information for three references to:

James Ellis (james.ellis72@gmail.com)
re: Grand Prairie Friends-Summer Internship

Specific questions regarding the summer internship can be directed to James Ellis (james.ellis72@gmail.com or 217.244.5695).

GPF is an all-volunteer not-for-profit conservation organization with a mission to preserve and restore natural communities in east-central Illinois and promote an understanding and appreciation of natural resources. More information about GPF can be found at **grandprairiefriends.org** and join us at [facebook.com/grandprairiefriends](https://www.facebook.com/grandprairiefriends).

Native Plant Sale 2014 Volunteer Opportunities

Wow, it's cold outside, but that doesn't stop us from thinking of spring. Many of you will be gardening soon, and that means it's time for the Grand Prairie Friends **Annual Native Plant Sale**. The sale will be held at Lincoln Square in downtown Urbana on **Saturday May 10** from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Before GPF can sell plants, we need to grow plants. Volunteers helped collect and thresh seeds, and now we need **volunteers** to plant, transplant, label, haul, and sell. We'll put seeds in the soil on Saturday **February 22** starting at 10 AM in the Natural Resources Study Annex (NRSA) Greenhouse, 1910 S. Griffith Dr., Champaign. This greenhouse is south of St. Mary's Road and west of First Street to the southwest of Assembly Hall.

Once seedlings are growing, we **transplant** them to pots. We'll gather on Thursday evenings from 6:30 to 8:00 PM through April for this task—April 3, 10, 17, 24, May 1 and 8—in the NRSA greenhouse. On Friday **May 9** from 5:00 to 7:00 PM we'll move plants from the greenhouse to Lincoln Square to get ready for the big sale on Saturday morning.

GPF needs all the help it can muster. If you like to get your hands dirty, come out and help transplant in the greenhouse. We'll need strong hands and backs as well as a few people with trucks on May 9 to move plants. Volunteers are vital on the day of the sale to help customers, to answer questions about native plants, to promote GPF, and to serve as cashiers.

The Native Plant Sale is GPF's **biggest fundraiser** of the year. This event provides money to carry out our conservation mission and to hire summer interns. Tell your friends!

If you have any questions please contact Jamie Ellis (244-5695 or james.ellis72@gmail.com). Rob Stanton will be coordinating set-up at Lincoln Square (robert.l.stanton@gmail.com) and Ed Wilhite will be coordinating volunteer cashiers (dianeed@sbcglobal.net). Special thanks to Beth Wohlgenuth as well who will be coordinating advertising.

If you're ready to sign up and help, let us know.

For archives of this newsletter, go to
<http://grandprairiefriends.org/aprarchive.php>

2013 Rattlesnake Master Run, behind the scenes

Brenda Molano-Flores,
Jean Mengelkoch,
Tara Beveroth

Sunday November 3 at Meadowbrook Park was a great day for a run. Yes!!! the 16th Annual Rattlesnake Master Run happened that day. First, we would like to thank our sponsors (Table 1) and volunteers (Table 2), as without them, this event would not be possible. Also, thanks to all the 251 participants, friends and family members for supporting and encouraging the runners and walkers. Instead of a general account of the race, this year we decided to give you an idea of what it takes to put together this event - yes, a behind the scenes experience.

Starting in the summer the Rattlesnake Master Committee (Table 3) holds numerous organizational meetings to make sure that this event runs smoothly. During these meetings, we talk about contacting our sponsors, t-shirt design, volunteer needs, permits from the City of Urbana and the Urbana Park District, publicity, food needs, supply needs (tables, water coolers, etc.), the course, awards, door prizes, and contingency plans if the weather is bad, etc.

The week before the race we have a final organizational meeting. This meeting is to make sure that we have enough volunteers and that they know their duties, determine the number of registrants thus far, double check food needs, order t-shirts, and any last minute issues (or crises!!!).

Because safety is always a priority for this event, we request 100 orange cones, 10 barricades, 2 stop signs and 50 vests for volunteers from Urbana Public Works. These are picked up the Friday before the race and returned the Monday following the race. Prior to the race the Urbana Park District makes sure the trails on the course are clear and in good condition. Additionally, either Friday or Saturday before the race we walk the course to check conditions and to mark the course (mile markers, start and finish lines, paint tree roots for safety, etc.).

In addition, during race week we pick up the awards, door prizes, and food from sponsors. Lastly, members of the organizational committee are at Body N' Sole from noon to 5 pm for packet



Runners and walkers scamper through the prairie.

pick up the Saturday prior to race day. Although we always remind runners and walkers to change their clocks back for Daylight Savings Time the night before the race, it is never a surprise to see one or two really early birds on race day!

Now the good part, Sunday or Race Day!! is a crazy morning for the Rattlesnake Master Committee members starting at 5:30 am!!! Just for the record, we are not all morning people! We set up the course, put out cones, barricades, mile markers, prepare food and drinks, sign up last minute registrants, place volunteers and water stations on the course, direct parking, and control traffic. All of this has to be ready for the 9 am start to the race.

With everyone in position the race begins and we begin encouraging and directing the runners and walkers on the course so they can make it through the finish line shoot happily and successfully. After they finish, the participants help themselves to food and refreshments put out by our dedicated volunteers.

We tally the race results, give out door prizes and awards, make sure the volunteers return to the pavilion (and aren't left on the course!), pick up the course (cones, barricades, signs, etc.), and finally clean up the pavilion. By this time it is about 12 pm. Yes!!!, we all look exhausted and we are thinking, I am not doing this again next year. But you know what? Shortly thereafter,

(continued on next page)

we are also thinking about how to make the race better next year and for that, we have one final wrap-up meeting.

This run has become very popular among central IL runners and we are very proud of the success of this event. We post our results on-line and our awards, native plants, typically puzzle the first time runner, but seasoned participants look forward to them. Lastly, as part of this event we have a unique opportunity to promote natural areas, their conservation and healthy living.

So we hope to see you this year on Sunday, Nov. 2, 2014 at 9:00 am at Meadowbrook Park. And, if you are interested in volunteering or joining the Rattlesnake Master Committee, please let us know. We are always looking for additional help.

This year we had an awesome t-shirt design by Taylor Studio. Believe it or not this is the first time since GPF took over the race that we have included the rattlesnake master plant as part of our t-shirt! But don't worry, our "mascot" the rattlesnake master runner created by Mindy Ellis was on the back of the t-shirt.

Table 1.

Sponsors of the 16th Annual Rattlesnake Master Run for the Prairie.

Body N' Sole Sport	Campus Sportswear
Grand Prairie Friends	Great Harvest
IL Native Plant Society	Dandelion
IL Portable Toilets	IL Master Naturalist
Mack's Recycling	Mike Jeffords' Photos
Sleepy Creek Vineyards	Strawberry Fields
Taylor Studios	Wolf Orchards
Esquire	
Law Offices of Evans, Froehlich, Beth & Chamley	
IL Natural History Survey	

Table 2.

Volunteers for the 16th Annual Rattlesnake Master Run for the Prairie.

Altstetter, Carl	Anderson, Ansel
Anderson, Janet	Beveroth, Tara Ann
Borgia, Eileen	Burgener, Sandy
Burgener, Steve	Burke, Marya
Cunningham, Connie	Cunningham, Grant
DeWitt, Teresa	Easter, Dave
Easter, Dianda	Effert, Eden
Elder, Chuck	Elder, Julie
Fanta, Shari	Feist, Mary Ann
Grubb, Susan	Hendren, Suzanne
Hult, Phil	Ingram, Denise
James, Stacy	Jarvis, Janet
Knoll, Harold	Jurylo, Jesse
LeGrande, Ron	Leiter, Pam
Marcum, Paul	Mast, Joyce
McIntyre, Susan	McMahon, Rich
Mengelkoch, Jean	Molano Flores, Brenda
Mui, Jen	Norton, Ray
Olson, Daniel	Payne, Jim
Peyton, Jeffrey	Russell, Gary
Smith, Bev	Snellen, Nancy
Solecki, Mary Kay	Stech, Mary
Steinman, Carol	Wilhite, Diane
Wilhite, Ed	Wohlgemuth, Elizabeth
Multiple volunteers from Lincoln's Challenge Academy	

Table 3.

Rattlesnake Master Run for the Prairie Committee

Beveroth, Tara	Cunningham, Connie
Kurylo, Jesse	Liebert, Derek
Marcum, Paul	Mengelkoch, Jean
Molano-Flores, Brenda	Snellen, Nancy
Wilhite, Diane	Wilhite, Ed

Oh, and one last thing...

Winter Membership Meeting: March 7

You are cordially invited to attend the Annual Grand Prairie Friends Winter Membership Meeting to be held on Friday, March 7, 2014 at 7:00 PM in the Anita Purves Nature Center (1505 N. Broadway, Urbana).

We are very pleased to welcome Mary Kay Solecki, Natural Areas Preservation Specialist with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission who will give a talk entitled: **Preserving the Best of Illinois: a Conservation Success Story**. Ms. Solecki will chronicle and highlight the 50-year

history of the Nature Preserves Commission and its work to protect and steward natural areas in Illinois.

The evening will start at 7:00 PM with a desert potluck and a short business meeting immediately followed by our guest speaker.

You are invited to bring a dessert to share. Eating utensils and drinks provided.

This event is free and open to the welcome public.