



Old Garden Roses and Prairie Wild
Flowers are in memory of Jodi Bausman

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

In the Prairie Garden

Our little prairie showcases mesic to mesic-wet plants that were common in the tallgrass prairie native to this area. The plot was planted in 1983 by Marlyn Bausman, one of the founders of the Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens, in memory of his daughter Jodi, and is a relatively early example of a prairie plant garden. This garden has evolved over time, with some species increasing and others dying out, but many are right where they were planted 40 years ago, testaments to the endurance of these plants. During 2022, 57 native plants were identified in the plot.

Visit the prairie garden web page!

dubuquearboretum.net/prairie-garden/



Here you will find a link to our prairie plants with identification information and interesting facts. Plants you might notice in the prairie garden include Butterfly Weed,

Rattlesnake Master, Compass Plant, Cup Plant, Purple Coneflower, and Queen of the Prairie.

ABOUT

The Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens

OUR MISSION | *Enriching lives through nature by providing education, enjoyment, and inspiration.*

A part of the Dubuque community since 1980, the 56-acre Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens features more than 60 different types of gardens.

All volunteer-created and volunteer-maintained, its grounds continue to grow and expand year after year.

We hope you return to observe how the plants change over a season and perhaps encounter some of the insects, spiders, small mammals, and birds that live here.



Follow the Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens on Facebook and visit our website at dubuquearboretum.net/!



**DUBUQUE ARBORETUM
AND BOTANICAL GARDENS**

Prairies of the American Midwest

America's expansive grasslands began to appear about 12,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age, when the massive North American glaciers retreated. The first European explorers and settlers who arrived in what would eventually become Iowa encountered a unique ecosystem of grass and flowering, nonwoody plants (known as forbs) in vast tracts, punctuated by sporadic oak and hickory trees on bluffs and hills and carpeted underneath by more shade-tolerant forbs. Other woodland tree species occurred along streams and rivers. This landscape, which was previously unknown to Europeans, eventually took on the French word for *meadow*: prairie.

The prairie ecosystem had been shaped and maintained by large grazing herbivore mammals (bison, deer, and elk), digging mammals (prairie dogs and ground squirrels), and fire, either resulting from lightning strikes or intentionally

set by indigenous people to drive game animals and attract game to food sources in the spring. Plant and animal species in these ecological communities had adapted and evolved to survive a range of conditions, from hot and dry (so-called xeric conditions) to medium-moisture (mesic conditions) to wet and boggy. Periodic severe winters and drought with fire favored the prairie grasses and forbs over trees. Deep, branching roots, often more extensive than above-ground growth, are characteristic of prairie plants and allow them to survive droughty conditions. Deep roots bring mineral nutrients to the surface of the soil where they are eventually released for other plants to utilize.

Between 1800 and 1930, the vast majority of prairies disappeared. At first settlers thought the grasslands were of poor fertility, but they soon learned that the black soil tallgrass prairie of Iowa was some of the best farmland in the world, its productivity and resultant wealth a direct result of soil pushed south by glaciers and the annual cycles of prairie renewal. Factors that led to the prairie's demise were suppression of fire, the change in grazing patterns of confined cattle, and the breaking of prairie sod thanks to John Deere's newly invented steel plow. Tilling for agricultural purposes drained prairie wet areas, and disturbing the soil can also allow Old World annual "weed" species to outcompete prairie plants. Woodland edges, like our prairie, often see invasion by woody plant and vine species, the seeds of which are carried in by birds and mammals.



What can we do to help?

Efforts are underway throughout Iowa and the Midwest to preserve and restore prairie vegetation wherever possible. These plants are adapted to the extremes of our mid-continental climate, support a diversity of life, and are beautiful in their own wild way. Over the past 30 years, numerous roadsides have been converted to native grasses and wildflowers, and home gardeners and landscapers are adding native plants to garden beds and replacing portions of turf lawns. We all can help out by planting native plants on our properties, even if just in a small area.

Every little bit of prairie helps preserve these special plants and the creatures that depend on them!

