NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NORTHEASTERN OHIO
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ON THE FRINGE

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AUGUST PROGRAMS AND EVENTS:

August 12-14: Our picnic and regular meeting will commence the Prairie Weekend and Native Plant Sale co-sponsored by our Society and Holden Arboretum. Bring whatever your family needs for a picnic dinner and we will meet by the picnic area close to the Corning Bldg. at 5:00 p.m. on Friday. After dinner we will hold a short business meeting and we urge our members to bring up any questions that you may have about our Society. At 8:00 p.m., Mr. William R. Jordan III of the University of Wisconsin Arboretum will be speaking on the topic of "Making Nature Whole: Ecosystem Restoration and Arboreta". Mr. Jordan is editor of "Restoration and Management Notes" and a recognized authority on prairies. This lecture is being donated by our Society, in honor of Elizabeth S. Martin, who's inspiration made possible the beautiful Myrtle S. Holden Wildflower Garden. We salute Mrs. Martin for her abundant achievements as a naturalist and thank her for true devotion to so worthy a project as the Wildflower Garden. On Saturday, Guy Denny of the ODNR will speak on "Prairie and Ohio" at 10:00 a.m. and Jim Bissell of The Natural History Museum will speak on "Landscaping with Prairie Plants" at 2:00 p.m. On Sunday at 2:00 p.m., Bob Bartolotta will commentate a slide program entitled "Prairie and Bog Plants", with slides provided by Jack Selby. These events, plus the Native Plant Sale and numerous activities are open to the public. Come and enjoy an outdoor weekend in pleasant surroundings and among good company.

August 27: Field trip. Geneva State Park. Leader, Bob Bartolotta. Aquatic and beach plants. Take 90E to Geneva exit Rt. 534. Turn north on 534 and after you pass Kuhar's Restaurant on the west side, you will shortly see the south entrance of Geneva State Park. Turn left into the entrance and right at the first stop sign. Follow signs to the beach and meet at the bathhouse. Bob will conduct the walk from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon.

Brian Parsons will announce the September program at the August meeting.

THE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE RETURNS

by Karl Smith, Resident Naturalist
Brecksville Interpretive Center
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Tallgrass prairies have come and gone but one is coming again. The one that is coming is called the Brecksville Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem Restoration Project.

The plant communities that grew in Ohio have changed in response to changes in the climate and human activities. One example is the coming and going and coming of the community of plants known as Tallgrass Prairie.

The Tallgrass Prairie community contains less than one mature tree per acre and is dominated by tall grasses, most often big bluestem. Many other species of non-woody plants grow with the grasses. In August on a prairie, the big bluestem, prairie dock, and others will be taller than you and so thick that a person standing in the prairie ten yards away cannot be seen. The tallest plant we had last year on our planted prairie here in Brecksville was 10'10" tall. It was oldfield thistle.

Scientific studies have clearly shown that from 8000 years ago until 4000 years ago, Ohio and much of the world experienced a very hot and dry climate. It was so hot and dry that trees died. The trees died, the drought-resistant plants of the tallgrass prairies moved eastward. Most prairie species need full sunlight and cannot grow in the shade under trees. SO THE PRAIRIE CAME!

About 4000 years ago, the climate began to change to our present cool, moist climate. This type of climate favors tree growth, therefore the forest increased and the prairies decreased. THE PRAIRIE IS GOING!

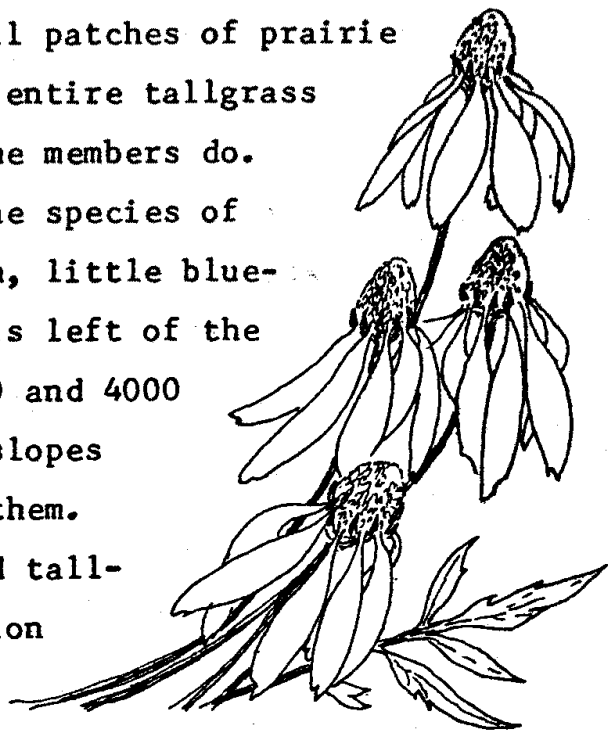
The dense sod that prairie plants produced slowed the invasion of trees. When tree seed fell on the dense prairie sod, taking root and growing was difficult. Dried grasses and other prairie plants also burn readily. The fires damaged the woody plants and in some cases, killed the trees and shrubs. But the dominant factor that controls

which plants will grow over large areas is the climate. For example, compare Ohio with Kansas or North Dakota. Our climate favors trees, theirs does not. It is estimated that about 2% of Ohio was in prairie when the first non-native settlers arrived. That means there was about 825 square miles of prairie winning the battle with the climate.

The dense prairie sod that resisted the invading trees, resisted all but the newly developed steel plow. It was as much work to break the prairie sod as it was to clear and plow the forest.

The vast majority of the prairies were plowed but it took the new good steel plow, four to six oxen, a great deal of work, and a new faith to prove that the prairie soil would be good farm land. Most of the early settlers were from Western Europe and had no experience with grasslands. They believed that land that did not grow trees would not be good farm land. When they learned how well the prairie soils grow corn and other crops, the prairies were doomed. The plowing of Ohio's prairie started in about 1810, and has not stopped yet.

The climate has been destroying Ohio's prairies for about 4000 years. Human activity, plowing, home building etc. have been destroying Ohio prairies for over 170 years. But some small patches of prairie still are "alive and well". Sometimes the entire tallgrass prairie community does not survive, but some members do. For example, in the Bedford Reservation nine species of prairie plants grow, including big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indian grass. They may be what is left of the prairie invasion that happened between 8000 and 4000 years ago. They grow in full sunlight on slopes that are so unstable trees cannot grow on them.



THE PRAIRIE IS COMING BACK! The planted tallgrass prairie here in Brecksville Reservation has grown by half an acre with the plant-

Sponsored by the Holden Arboretum

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ing of 43 species on June 2. It is now 1½ acres in size. It is planned to be 2 acres by this time next year.

Two and a half bushels of seed from native northern Ohio prairie plants have been collected in each of the past three years to make this planting possible.

This planted prairie is located along the yellow trail about 200 yards west of the Trailside Interpretive Center. Come to enjoy the return of the Tallgrass Prairie Ecosystem. It is a rare sight to see—this community of plants that have come and gone over the years.

To experience this prairie firsthand, join Karl on Saturday August 27, at 2:00 PM.