

Native Prairie Garden
Final Report
For
The Student Sustainability Committee



Creating a native prairie landscape
to educate, provide habitat, beautify and inspire

COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE



Introduction

Illinois is the Prairie State, so-called because of the once biologically rich grassland that covered about 60% of our landscape. Today, because of agricultural and urban development, more than 99% of the original prairie is gone. Efforts to conserve the state's prairie heritage include protection of unplowed remnants, reconstruction of prairie through new plantings and creation of gardens using native prairie plants.

In 2009, The Student Sustainability Committee awarded The College of Veterinary Medicine a grant of \$21,700 for the purpose of establishing a Native Prairie Garden consisting of plants characteristic of native tallgrass prairie in central Illinois. This garden was designed to educate, beautify and inspire. It will:

- Be a public symbol of our commitment to the native plant species of our ecosystem as well as the native species that rely on that ecosystem, and hopefully inspire similar projects on campus and the surrounding community.
- Provide an accessible space on campus as resource for faculty, staff, students, and community members to learn about native plants and the benefits of landscaping with native plants.
- Provide low maintenance use of the landscaping, reducing utility & labor costs from the elimination of mowing.



Implementation 2009

In April and May of 2009, the two sites were prepared for planting. An outside contractor was hired to kill the sod by applying glyphosate based herbicide. This eventually required two applications of the product to completely eliminate grass and other plants in the areas. A week before our planting day approximately 12 volunteers gathered on a Saturday to spread mulch which was purchased from the City of Urbana Landscape Recycling Center.

Saturday of the 2nd weekend in June, over 100 volunteers participated in planting the garden. Two different crews using drill mounted augers were drilling holes on 1 foot spacing throughout the garden. Two crews were responsible for transporting plants from inside storage to the gardens. Multiple crews of volunteers began planting and at the end of the day over 7,200 plants were in the ground and watered. The next week a temporary sprinkler system was installed for the summer. Due to a shortage of plants from the supplier and a mistake in estimating on our part, the entire garden was not planted in 2009. There was an additional 2,000 sq ft left to plant. It was decided to finish the project in Spring 2010.

2009 had one of the wettest summers in recent history. Consequently the temporary sprinkler system was used only once in the season. Unfortunately the weather conditions made it an ideal environment for growing crabgrass. Throughout the summer multiple volunteers from Vet Med, Grand Prairie Friends, and Illinois Natural History Survey tirelessly pulled weeds and applied herbicide. At the end of the summer, very few plants died from weed infestation.

Implementation 2010

In 2010 the project generally was the same as the year before but a much smaller scale, 2,400 plants. Again plants were backordered and a second planting day was scheduled. The differences this year were that we paid F&S to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to control crabgrass. This helped contain weed germination but the newer part of the garden still required many hours of volunteer support applying herbicide directly on crabgrass infestation. This year mulch was provided by the University Grounds Department. Vet Med covered the cost of the pre-emergent and labor to transport the mulch.



One component of this project was to be the fabrication and installation of a sign for the purpose of education and acknowledging the Student Sustainability Committee for support of the garden. The sign has been constructed by F&S. There are currently discussions with the Architectural Review Committee about the size & design. When approval is granted by the committee The College of Veterinary Medicine will take responsibility for costs associated with the further modification and installation of the sign.

Realized Benefits

The Native Prairie Garden at Veterinary Medicine has been a great success. The plants from 2009 have established themselves well and no longer are threatened by drought or weed growth. Other than clearing the ground for new growth every spring, the garden requires no maintenance. Although still small, the plants from 2010 are also established and will now produce a healthy addition to the garden for 2011.

The established portion of the garden has flowering plants all season and has been a host to birds, butterflies, bees, and other insects.

- Many people in the community as well as Veterinary Medicine staff and faculty have made positive comments on the looks and usefulness of the garden.
- Members of the Red Bison club have been collecting seeds for use in other prairie Habitats.
- A Vet Med faculty member, Marcella D. Ridgway has used the garden as a teaching aid, and also presented a paper on the subject at the North American Prairie Conference, <http://www.napc2010.org/index.html>
- Volunteers for Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners have been using the garden as an opportunity for work required for volunteer hours for certification.

Acknowledgements

The principal managers of this project wish to thank the members of the Student Sustainability Committee for their support through funding and volunteerism and for their patience throughout the project. We would also like to acknowledge the support from the many volunteers from the University and community, including: the College of Veterinary Medicine faculty, students, and staff, Illinois Natural History staff and interns, and members of Grand Prairie Friends and Red Bison.

Budget

| Vendor | Date | Purpose | Amount |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Design Group | 3-31-2009 | Sign Design | 50.00 |
| Menards | 4-18-2009 | Flags & Markers | 112.70 |
| Design Group | 4-30-2009 | Sign Design | 258.00 |
| Atlantic Services | 5-11-2009 | Herbicide Application | 500.00 |
| Lowes | 5-19-2009 | Rakes | 46.07 |
| City of Urbana | 5-20-2009 | Mulch | 1020.00 |
| Vet Med, Design Group | 5-31-2009 | Sign Design | 650.00 |
| Farm & Fleet | 6-3-2009 | Extension Cords | 51.16 |
| Champaign Hardware | 6-4-2009 | Drill Augers | 19.78 |
| True Value | 6-4-2009 | Drill Augers | 39.98 |
| Vet Med, Design Group | 6-30-2009 | Sign Design | 50.00 |
| Grand Prairie Friends | 6-30-2009 | Plants, year 1 | 918.00 |
| Horticulture 441 Class | 6.30.2009 | Plants, year 1 | 200.00 |
| Home Depot | 7-11-2009 | Weeding Supplies | 51.31 |
| Atlantic Services | 7-21-2009 | Temp Sprinkler | 800.00 |
| F&S, Utilities | 7-31-2009 | Utilities, Water | 34.24 |
| J. F. New | 9-11-2009 | Plants, year 1 | 9,700.52 |
| F&S | 5-31-2010 | Sign Fabrication | 2,614.30 |
| J. F. New | 6-2-2010 | Plants, year 2 | 4,173.30 |
| F&S | 6-30-2010 | Sign Fabrication | 307.78 |
| TOTAL | | | \$21,597.14 |
| Project Budget | | | \$21,700.00 |
| Balance | | | \$102.86 |