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Did You Know

- Dandelions, Thistle, Wild Oats are not native plants. They were brought here from Europe.
- Tallgrass prairies once covered 140 million acres in the US
- Illinois once was 65% prairie, it now has .1%.
- One gas-powered lawnmower emits 11 times the air pollution of a new car for each hour of operation.

Prairie In Your Own Backyard?

Why not? A garden that, once it's established is low maintenance. With our busy schedules isn't that what we want. Wouldn't we rather be lounging on our favorite lawn chair watching the birds and the butterflies sipping on mint juleps? Ok maybe lemonade, wine, beer.

Prairie Gardens aren't for everyone. What some people think as a beautiful natural habitat for wildlife others may think it's nothing but an unkept mass of weeds.

In this newsletter I will give you some tips of starting a prairie wildflower garden on a small scale for your own backyard. You don't have to

live in the country to have a small wildflower garden with native species. Even if this isn't for you, adding some of the native wildflowers to your perennial garden will give it interest. You will see even more birds and butterflies. My daughter and I always enjoy counting how many different butterflies come to visit our garden. I don't have a prairie wildflower garden yet but I do have many natives added to my perennial garden. I am planning on creating a wildflower garden using more native species and tie in a raingarden for storm water run off. I hope to



The Garretts Prairie

start this project this fall with the participation of my husband. We'll see how it goes and up date you. I will share the Garretts pictures of their prairie garden with you as well as some pictures from a raingarden I planted next door at Northleaf Winery.

Patty

What is a Native Prairie and a Prairie Plant?

A native prairie is an eco systems area that may have limited rainfall, usually have hot summers (not this year for us) and cold winters. Prairie plants are native wildflowers, tall grasses, legumes, sedges and mixed grasses. These all make up a prairie garden. They are plants that have evolved over thousands of years in a particular region. Some have adapted and survived

growing along side non-native species. Sadly some have been taken over by non natives.

Rattlesnake Master & Coneflower



Benefits of a Prairie Garden

- Natives don't require fertilizing so there wouldn't be any fertilizers going into our storm water run off systems like chemical lawn fertilizer do.
 - Natives don't need to be sprayed with pesticides as much as lawns do(if at all). So there will be less pesticides going into our lakes, ponds and rivers.
 - Native plants will not need as much water as your lawn. The soil is better able to store water do to the deep root system of some natives.
 - There will be less air pollution because natives will not have to be mowed like a conventional lawn. 5% of our nations air pollution comes from gas powered garden tools.
 - These plants provide natural habitants, shelter and food for wildlife, birds, butterflies.
- With even a small scale native prairie garden you will have less lawn maintenance and more time for yourself. Plus you will be keeping natives species alive for generations to come.



Cup Plant-Silphium perfoliatum
Small birds and animals drink water from the cupped leaves.

Planning Your Native Prairie

Here are a few things you might want to think about before planting your garden.
 What area are you going to use. It should have at least 6 hours of sun.
 Do you want pathways through it?
 Maybe a sitting area to watch the birds or butterflies.
 There are different bloom times, colors,

heights of native wildflowers. You should plan for that. You will want to have plants blooming all season.
 Are you going to use seeds or starter plants or a combination of both? Seeds can take 2-3 years to bloom.
 Keep a journal, write down your ideas.
 To see a list of native plants that I carry go to: www.pattysplants.com

You don't need to live out in the country to enjoy a natural native habitat.



Fun Facts

Boneset-Eupatorium perfoliatum was once sprinkled on the skin over broken bones in the belief that the bones would heal more quickly.
Rattlesnake-Master- Eryngium yuccifolium long ago people believed that the roots could be used to heal rattlesnake bites hence the common name.
New England Aster-novae-angliae the leaves were used by Native Americans to cure rashes such as poison ivy. The Shakers used the leaves in cosmetics to keep the complexion clear.

Harebell or Bluebell flower- Campanula roundifolia was called witches-thimbles, legend says that witches used to turn themselves into hares that would bring bad luck to people.
Mountain Mint-Pycnanthemum virginianum leaves were made into a tea and used medicinally to treat colds, chills, fevers, indigestion and colic.

Source: Prairie Plants of the UW-Madison Arboretum

Clearing the Area

There are a couple of ways to clear the area.

- Place black plastic down in the area you've chosen. This will heat up the ground under it thus killing the grass.
- Rent a sod cutter and remove the sod. If you till it under you will have disturbed the area and are more likely to have weed seeds germinate.
- For spring planting: in the fall turn

over the soil so the roots are exposed to freezing temperatures all the winter.

- There is the herbicide choice. If you must chose this way, use a herbicide that has a low toxicity or is non- persistent..



Butterfly Weed
Asclepias tuberosa

Wild Quinine



Prairie Soils

There are 3 different types of soils for prairie plants.

Wet-This is an area were the soil is moist at all times during the growing season. It may have a bog and stagnant water. It has very poor drainage. A low spot in the yard that collects water would be a good area for **raingarden plants**.

Dry- This prairie soil is mostly dry through

the growing season. It has good drainage. A hill, slope or gravely area is were this one is usually found.

Mesic- This prairie soil has good drainage and gets moisture during the season. Most home garden soil would typically be a mesic.



Planting, Mulching & Maintenance

Starter Plants:

After you have prepared the area and you have picked the starter plants. Place them in the area by the sizes and colors you have chosen.

When you remove the plants from the containers, check the root system if it is extremely root bound cut in to it and free up the roots. (See Pictures) I like to add an organic planting mix to the hole before I plant. (It gets the roots off to a good start). You can plant 18-21" apart.

Wildflower prairie plants need a lot of room to grow. Make sure you label your plants. You may want to add many more varieties as you see how your garden is growing. Mulch with fine bark or Fox-farm soil conditioner with fine bark, worm castings plus. Maintain your prairie garden by pruning and removing old growth as burning may not be permitted in your town.

www.pattysplants.com



Rain Garden Planting at Northleaf Winery 7/9/09
I will update as the plants grow.

Note: You might want to keep it neat and tidy around your wildflower prairie garden as not to upset your neighbors who like a more formal look.

Patty's Plants

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WE'RE ON THE WEB
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For information on prairie restoration go to :
www.tallgrassrestoration.com

Tallgrass Restoration specializes in Native Gardens & Prairie Installations, Rain Gardens, Weed Control, Brush Removal & stewardship, Prescribed Burning, Shoreline & Ravine Erosion Control

A big **“Thank You”** to the Garretts
For all their prairie pictures.



We carry starter plants of native prairie wildflowers, grasses and sedges for prairies and rain gardens. Go to: www.pattysplants.com for a variety list.

Free UW– Extension Raingarden How-to-Manual for Homeowners with the purchase of 12 or more native plants.

For more info contact: patty@pattysplants.com

Cooking with:

“Garlic Mustard”

- Use leaves year-round in any recipe calling for mustard greens
- Harvest roots before flowering, use like horseradish
- Save seed-use as a spicy condiment
- Younger leaves have mildly garlic flavor
- Older leaves are bitter , round leaves are less bitter than triangular ones on the flower stalk
- If it’s in full flower or producing seeds it will be bitter
- Pull up the entire plant – gently– the roots will help keep the plant fresh until used.
- Cut leaves, discard flower stalk, wash and use

Recipes for Revenge– A Weed is a Weed or Food?

As the WDNR says, “Why not eat our edible invasive species?” This may not be for everyone but I thought it was fun so I’m including these recipes. Thank you, Chris at Tallgrass Restoration for sending them to me.

Garlic Mustard Pesto by Robert Dunn

1 cup garlic mustard
1/2 cup basil
3 garlic cloves
2 oz toasted pine nuts
4 oz olive oil
Juice of 1 lemon
In a food processor– combine all ingredients except olive oil. Puree and add olive oil with processor running. Toss on cooked pasta or on salad.

Mrs. Z’s Garlic Mustard Mashed Potatoes by Steve Wecker

4 large potatoes
1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 lb butter
2 slices salt pork chopped
Pepper to taste
Boil potatoes until soft. Cool, peel and mash. Sauté garlic mustard with the salt pork. Drain, add to potatoes with butter. Add sour cream and pepper. Bake for 25 at 350.

Garlic Mustard Pasta by Alex Streat

1 lb linguine
2T butter
1/2 cup garlic mustard – washed, crisped and chopped
Cook linguine, sauté garlic mustard in butter. Blend with linguine.
Serve hot or cold

As with all new foods use caution. Some people may be more sensitive.

Source: WDNR