

July 2023

## Irvine Prairie Wildflower Guide

Tallgrass Prairie Center, University of Northern Iowa

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### Recommended Citation

Tallgrass Prairie Center, University of Northern Iowa, "Irvine Prairie Wildflower Guide" (2023). *Open Educational Resources*. 352.

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# Irvine Prairie Wildflower Guide



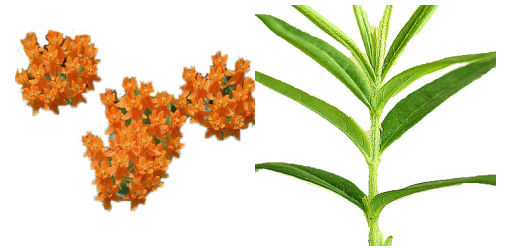
Stiff goldenrod



Wild bergamot



Biennial gaura



Butterfly milkweed



Compass plant



Golden Alexanders



Prairie ironweed



Partridge pea



Prairie cinquefoil



Sawtooth sunflower



Showy ticktrefoil



Prairie spiderwort



Wild quinine





## Showy ticktrefoil

**Scientific Name:**  
*Desmodium canadense*

**Sun:** Full or partial  
**Soil:** Moist to mesic black  
**Bloom time:** Mid-summer  
**Seed dispersal:** Attach to passing animals

**Fun Fact:**  
Bacteria that live in root nodules convert nitrogen from the air to the soil.



## Butterfly milkweed

**Scientific Name:**  
*Asclepias tuberosa*

**Sun:** Full  
**Soil:** Mesic to dry, well-drained  
**Bloom time:** Summer  
**Seed dispersal:** Wind

**Fun Fact:**  
Unlike other milkweed species, butterfly milkweed lacks milky latex in the stems and leaves.



## Sawtooth sunflower

**Scientific Name:**  
*Helianthus grosseserratus*

**Sun:** Full  
**Soil:** Moist loam  
**Bloom time:** Late-summer  
**Seed dispersal:** Seed-feeding birds and small mammals

**Fun Fact:**  
This large flower often requires room in the prairie to form homogenous patches.







## Biennial gaura

**Scientific Name:**  
*Oenothera gaura*

**Sun:** Full

**Soil:** Mesic

**Bloom time:** Late-summer

**Seed dispersal:** Gravity

**Fun Fact:**

The flowers are cross-pollinated by nectar-seeking moths and long-tongued bees.



## Wild quinine

**Scientific Name:**  
*Parthenium integrifolium*

**Sun:** Full

**Soil:** Mesic

**Bloom time:** Late-spring through  
Mid-summer

**Seed dispersal:** Wind

**Fun Fact:**

To substitute for Cinchona tree bark, wild quinine was used to try to treat malaria during WWI.



## Partridge pea

**Scientific Name:**  
*Chamaecrista fasciculata*

**Sun:** Full

**Soil:** Dry sand, loam or gravel

**Bloom time:** Mid-summer into fall  
**Seed dispersal:** Bursting seed pod

**Fun Fact:**

Often used along streambanks and steep hills to stabilize the soil and prevent erosion. One of the few annual native prairie plants.







## Golden Alexanders

**Scientific Name:**

*Zizia aurea*

**Sun:** Full or partial

**Soil:** Moist or loamy

**Bloom time:** Late-spring to summer

**Seed dispersal:** Gravity

**Fun Fact:**

Not to be confused with wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), flowers provide early season nectar for short-mouthed insects.



## Wild bergamot

**Scientific Name:**

*Monarda fistulosa*

**Sun:** Full or partial

**Soil:** Moist loam to slightly dry

**Bloom time:** Mid-summer

**Seed dispersal:** Gravity

**Fun Fact:**

Leaves are fragrant when crushed, a characteristic shared by many members of the mint family. Leaves have long been used for medicines and aromatic oils.



## Prairie cinquefoil

**Scientific Name:**

*Drymocallis arguta*

**Sun:** Full

**Soil:** Mesic to dry

**Bloom time:** Mid-summer

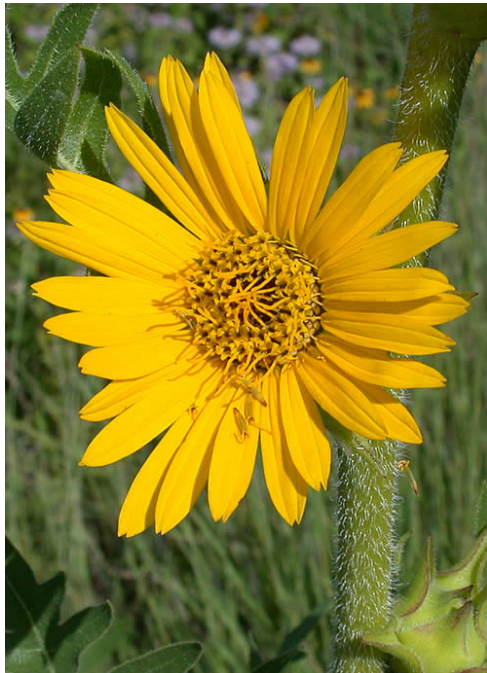
**Seed dispersal:** Wind

**Fun Fact:**

Ultra-violet reflecting patterns help the flowers stand out from the background and may function as nectar guides.







# Compass plant

**Scientific Name:**  
*Silphium laciniatum*

**Sun:** Full  
**Soil:** Moist to slightly dry  
**Bloom time:** Mid-summer  
**Seed dispersal:** Wind

**Fun Fact:**  
The common name derives from the pioneer belief that the leaves point north-south. While often true, it is not a reliable rule.

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# Prairie spiderwort

**Scientific Name:**  
*Tradescantia bracteata*

**Sun:** Full  
**Soil:** Dry to mesic  
**Bloom time:** Late-spring to summer  
**Seed dispersal:** Bursting seed pod

**Fun Fact:**  
When cut, it releases gooey strings of sap that resemble spider webs.

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# Stiff goldenrod

**Scientific Name:**  
*Oligoneuron rigidum*

**Sun:** Full  
**Soil:** Moist to slightly dry  
**Bloom time:** Late-summer into fall  
**Seed dispersal:** Wind

**Fun Fact:**  
Monarch butterflies are especially attracted to the bright yellow flower tufts. Herbivorous mammals eat this plant in mid-summer.







# Prairie ironweed

**Scientific Name:**  
*Vernonia fasciculata*

**Sun:** Full

**Soil:** Moist, can withstand occasional flooding

**Bloom time:** Late-summer into fall

**Seed dispersal:** Wind

**Fun Fact:**

The name Ironweed comes from how tough the plant is. Due to its fibrous nature and bitter taste, it has little to no use as a medicinal plant for humans or food for livestock.

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## About Irvine Prairie

Irvine Prairie is a 292 acre prairie-in-progress on the farm of Cathy Irvine in memory of her husband David. In partnership with Cathy and the farm operator, we are restoring an ecologically diverse tallgrass prairie that engages current and future generations of students and community members in learning about Iowa's prairie heritage and appreciating the benefits provided by prairie.

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation holds the conservation easement on the property, and the University of Northern Iowa Foundation Properties Corporation is the owner. The original 77 acres was dedicated on May 18, 2018. In January 2023, Cathy Irvine donated an additional 215 acres to complete the gift.

Since 2018, we have introduced over 100 species of native prairie plants, using the most genetically diverse and regionally appropriate seed sources available, and closely matching species with soil moisture conditions. Some hard-to-establish species are started in our greenhouse and introduced as plugs. The Tallgrass Prairie Center uses the best known approaches to controlling weeds and encouraging diverse, native wildlife. We are committed to documenting the work, and carefully monitoring the results, to guide future management decisions.

Find more information about Irvine Prairie at [www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org/irvine-prairie/](http://www.tallgrassprairiecenter.org/irvine-prairie/)

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## Additional Resources

**Iowa Prairie Network:** <https://www.iowaprairienetwork.org/>

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources:** <https://www.iowadnr.gov/conservation/prairie-resource-center>

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge:** [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Neal\\_Smith/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Neal_Smith/)

**Illinois Wildflowers:** <https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/>

**Minnesota Wildflowers:** <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/>

**Missouri Prairie Foundation:** <http://grownative.org/>

**U.S. Department of Agriculture - NRCS Plant Guide:** [plants.usda.gov](https://plants.usda.gov)