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The Clay Prairie in Butler County, Iowa

C. W. LANTZ¹

Abstract. The Clay Prairie is a small area of 2.64 acres of native prairie belonging to the University of Northern Iowa. It is located in Butler County, 15 miles northeast of Parkersburg, Iowa. A list of the species of the vascular plants found in this area is given, representing 33 families.

This small area of native prairie consists of a tract of land measuring 435 ft. x 270 ft. or 2.64 acres lying in Butler County about 15 miles northeast of Parkersburg, Iowa. It is an unused portion of a cemetery tract. It was purchased from the Cemetery Association by the University of Northern Iowa by a gift from Joseph B. Clay, an alumnus of the University. The area slopes toward the east and the east part has a much higher soil moisture content than the west side. This is indicated by the plants of the area, as such species as *Melanthium virginicum* and *Cicuta maculata* are found only in the east area. The variation in soil moisture accounts for the wide variety of species found.

Such areas are not common these days because of cultivation and the use of herbicides. It is desirable that more areas of this nature be set aside to preserve the native vegetation of the prairie. It is suggested that educational institutions and various nature organizations might find areas in their locality that might easily be secured and preserved. The University of Northern Iowa botany classes have found this prairie tract very useful.

A record of the species of plants in this area has been made for the last five years. Credit should be given to the late Dr. Martin Grant of the University of Northern Iowa for his help in the determination of the species.

The nomenclature used is according to Fernald, Gray's Manual of Botany 8th Edition. The order of listing is according to this manual. All plants identified are listed, including naturalized species hence there are a number which cannot be considered as native prairie plants.

PTERIDOPHYTA

Equisetaceae

Equisetum arvense L.

Equisetum kansanum Schaffn.

SPERMATOPHYTA

Gramineae

Bromus ciliatus L.

Stipa spartea Trin.

Poa pratensis L.

Agrostis alba L.

Hordeum jubatum L.

Spartina pectinata Link.

Koeleria cristata (L.) Pers.

Andropogon scoparius Michx.

Sporobolus cryptandrus (Torr.) Gray

Andropogon gerardi Vitman.

Phleum pratense L.

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| | Cyperaceae |
| <i>Carex Buxbaumii</i> Wahlenb. | <i>Carex Bicknellii</i> Brit. |
| | Liliaceae |
| <i>Melanthium virginicum</i> L. | <i>Lilium philadelphicum</i> L. |
| | Amaryllidaceae |
| <i>Hypoxis hirsuta</i> (L.) Coville. | |
| | Iridaceae |
| <i>Sisyrinchium campestre</i> Bickn. | |
| | Salicaceae |
| <i>Salix discolor</i> Muhl. | <i>Populus tremuloides</i> Michx. |
| <i>Salix humilis</i> Marsh. | |
| | Fagaceae |
| <i>Quercus rubra</i> . Var. <i>borealis</i> (Michx.) Farw. | |
| | Santalaceae |
| <i>Comandra Richardsiana</i> Fern | |
| | Polygonaceae |
| <i>Rumex crispus</i> L. | |
| | Ranunculaceae |
| <i>Thalictrum dasycarpum</i> | <i>Anemone patens</i> L. var. |
| Fisch. & Lall. | <i>Wolfgangiana</i> Koch |
| <i>Anemone canadensis</i> L. | |
| | Cruciferae |
| <i>Brassica Rapa</i> L. | <i>Cardamine bulbosa</i> (Schreb.) B.S.I. |
| | Saxifragaceae |
| <i>Saxifraga pennsylvanica</i> L. | <i>Heuchera richardsonii</i> R. Br. |
| | Rosaceae |
| <i>Spirea latifolia</i> (Ait.) Borkh. | <i>Rubus idaeus</i> Que. |
| <i>Fragaria virginiana</i> Duch. | <i>Rosa arkansana</i> Porter. |
| <i>Potentilla</i> sp.? L. | <i>Prunus virginiana</i> L. |
| <i>Geum triflorum</i> Pursh. | |
| | Leguminosae |
| <i>Baptisia leucantha</i> T. & G. | <i>Lespedeza capitata</i> Michx. |
| <i>Baptisia leucophaea</i> Nutt | <i>Desmodium canadense</i> (L.) D. C. |
| <i>Medicago sativa</i> L. | <i>Lathyrus palustris</i> L. |
| <i>Amorpha canescens</i> Pursh. | <i>Trifolium repens</i> L. |
| <i>Petalostemum purpureum</i> Rydb. | <i>Trifolium arvense</i> L. |
| <i>Petalostemum candidum</i> | |
| (Willd.) Michx. | |
| | Oxalidaceae |
| <i>Oxalis violaceae</i> L. | |
| | Euphorbiaceae |
| <i>Euphorbia Cyparissmas</i> L. | <i>Euphorbia corollata</i> L. |
| | Anacardiaceae |
| <i>Rhus glabra</i> L. | |
| | Rhamnaceae |
| <i>Ceanothus americana</i> L. | |
| | Cistaceae |
| <i>Helianthemum Bicknellii</i> Fern | |
| | Violaceae |
| <i>Viola pedata</i> L. | <i>Viola pedatifida</i> G. Don |

	Umbelliferae	
<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i> Michx.		<i>Cicuta maculata</i> L.
<i>Zizia aurea</i> (L.) Koch.		<i>Sium suave</i> Walt.
<i>Zizia aptera</i> (Gray) Fern		<i>Pastinaca sativa</i> L.
	Primulaceae	
<i>Dodecatheon Meadia</i> L.		<i>Lysimachia ciliata</i> L.
	Gentianaceae	
<i>Gentiana puberula</i> Michx.		
	Asclepidaceae	
<i>Asclepias syriaca</i> L.		<i>Asclepias viridiflora</i> Raf.
	Convolvulaceae	
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i> L.		
	Polemoniaceae	
<i>Phlox pilosa</i> L.		
	Boraginaceae	
<i>Lithospermum canescens</i> (Michx.) Lehm.		
	Labiatae	
<i>Pycnanthemum virginicum</i> (L.)		
	Scrophulariaceae	
<i>Veronicastrum virginicum</i> (L) Farw.		<i>Pedicularis canadensis</i> L.
<i>Castilleja coccinea</i> (L.) Spreng.		
	Rubiaceae	
<i>Galium borealis</i> L.		
	Campanulaceae	
<i>Lobelia spicata</i> Lam.		
	Compositae	
<i>Liatis pycnostachya</i> Michx.		<i>Ratibida pinnata</i> (Vent.) Barnk.
<i>Erigeron strigosus</i> Michx.		<i>Coreopsis palmata</i> Nutt.
<i>Antennaria plantaginifolia</i> (L.)		<i>Achillea lanulosa</i> Nutt.
Hook.		<i>Cacalia tuberosa</i> Nutt.
<i>Ambrosia trifida</i> L.		<i>Senecio aureus</i> L.
<i>Solidago canadensis</i> L.		<i>Carduus</i> sp.?
<i>Silphium laciniatum</i> L.		<i>Cirsium floodmanii</i> Rydb.
<i>Parthenium integrifolium</i> L.		<i>Krigia biflora</i> (Walt.) Blake.
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> L.		<i>Tragopogon major</i> Jacq.
<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i> (L.) Sweet.		<i>Taraxacum erythrospermum</i> Andrez.
<i>Echinacea angustifolia</i> DC		

A total of 33 families and 98 species have been identified in this area. The families represented by the largest number of species are the grass family (*Gramineae*) with 11 species, the legume family (*Leguminosae*) with 11 species and the composite family (*Compositae*) with 20 species. Some of the most abundant species as to individual plants other than grasses are shooting stars (*Dodecatheon meadii*), golden Alexanders (*Zizia aureus*), meadow sweet (*Spiraea latifolia*) and bush clover (*Lespedeza capitata*).

Some of the rare or infrequent species found are purple avens (*Geum triflorum*), downy gentian (*Gentiana puberula*), green

milkweed (*Asclepias viridiflora*), Indian paint brush (*Castilleja coccinea*), and rattle snake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*). The frequency of species in this area agrees fairly closely with the report of Eilers on the prairie flora of northeastern Iowa.

Such species as purple avens (*Geum triflorum*), downy gentian (*Gentiana puberula*), Indian paint brush (*Castilleja coccinea*), bird's foot violet (*Viola pedata*) and prairie violet (*Viola pedatifida*) should be carefully preserved. These species are attractive to wild flower hunters and are in danger of being destroyed. Attention needs to be given to preserve for future generations some of the native prairie plants which are fast disappearing.

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