

## Upcoming Events

### Free State Prairie Walk

Saturday, August 29th, 2015

9:00 am - 10:30 am

4700 Overland Drive, Lawrence, Kansas

Join us as we tour the prairie restoration at Free State High School. Project leaders Julie Schwarting, Biology and Environmental Science Instructor, and Helen Alexander, KU Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Professor, will discuss the project's history and current activities. Frank Norman, GHF Snyder Prairie Preserve Manager, will then lead a plant walk through the restoration area. An RSVP is requested to Kim Bellemere at [grasslandheritage@gmail.com](mailto:grasslandheritage@gmail.com). Please call Kim at 785-840-8104 with questions.

### Free State Prairie History

The Free State Prairie is an exciting collaboration between Kansas University, Free State High School, and community members, which provides opportunities for students from both schools to research, work together, and educate the public about restored prairies.

In 2014, Free State Prairie was established on the campus of Free State High School with the goal of involving students in environmental education, research, and outreach. The project has two parts. First, a 1.4 acre prairie restoration and community ecology experiment was established. This site was seeded with prairie grasses and wildflowers. Although prairie plants have successfully established at the site, it will take several years before it resembles a native prairie (weedy plants currently dominate, as expected for this stage of the project). Second, a "prairie demonstration site" was created with plants that students grew from seed in the Free State greenhouse. The goal for this site (2500 sq. ft.) is to create an "instant" prairie that can be used for education and outreach. Both projects have involved high school students and teachers, researchers at KU, and many community volunteers.

### Directions:

Park on the west side of Free State High School. Walk through the gates to the athletic fields and follow the sidewalk around the back of the football stadium. When the sidewalk ends, head west across the grass and the prairie sites will soon be obvious after a short walk.



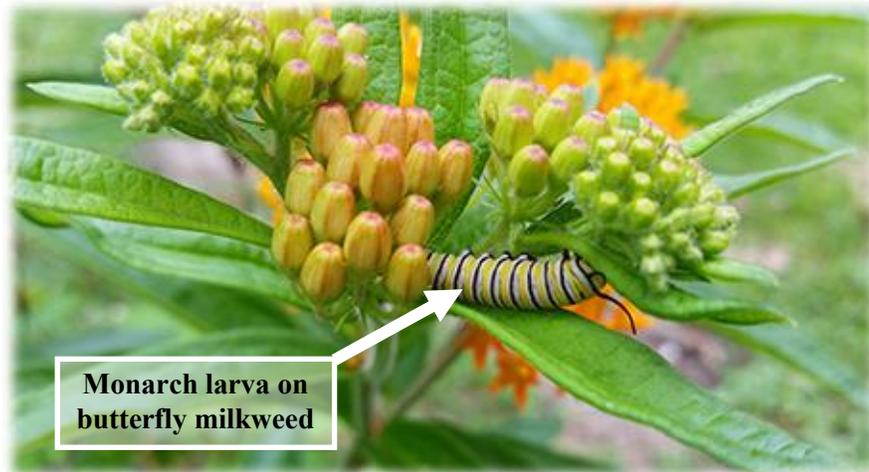
Photo taken from Kansas Association of Biology Teachers from Julie Schwarting's Power Point presentation  
<http://www.kabt.org/2014/09/13/free-state-prairie-project/>



Snapshot taken from Google Maps

## President's Column

Summer is a time for action for prairie enthusiasts! One of my own goals this summer has been to increase the number of milkweeds in my yard. They're beautiful plants, and I hope to support as many Monarch butterflies as possible. I wanted to plant a LOT of milkweed, so I cold stratified two packets of milkweed seeds from the Monarch Watch in damp paper towels in the refrigerator. The six-week stratification period turned into a year and six weeks, so when I opened the plastic bags, I had a moldy, half-frozen mess. To my surprise, the seeds looked plump and perfect! They sprouted very well, too. About 100 out of 160 seeds germinated and thrived in seed flats that I kept over a warm space heater in a sunny window through a few cool spring weeks. I may end up with just a handful of milkweeds that survive to next year, due to losses from transplanting and rabbit grazing. Who knew that rabbits would munch milkweeds? They probably don't prefer it, but my yard is like the Japanese rabbit island. If each rabbit in the herd takes one taste, my plants would be obliterated. Thanks to the GHF and Monarch Watch annual plant sales, I already had several large butterfly milkweed plants in my yard that have hosted about 6 fat, healthy Monarch caterpillars so far this summer. It's fun and thrifty to start plants from seed, but we may get better plant survival when we buy healthy, bigger plants at the native plant sales.



**Monarch larva on butterfly milkweed**

Photo from Andrea's yard taken by Jason Keezer

One concern with growing plants that will support native birds and insects is that our native fauna will make a meal out of our decorative plants, leaving chew holes. I haven't found it to be a problem; the caterpillars had plenty of food, I barely notice any missing foliage, and the plants continue to thrive and bloom. Actually, I wonder whether the milkweeds are growing and blooming more in response to caterpillar munching.

There are many other things we can all do for the prairie, such as get involved with the projects and activities throughout this newsletter. Summer is a time of action, but it's also the glorious time of year we get to enjoy the floral show of the prairie. Go out and see it!

*Andrea Repinsky*  
adheron@yahoo.com



Purple Milkweed, *Asclepias purpurascens*

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### GHF Officers

President: Andrea Repinsky

Vice-President: Megan Withiam

Secretary: Sue Holcomb

Treasurer: Steve Holcomb

Assistant to the Treasurer:  
Kevin Bachkora

## More Upcoming Events

### Easy donation opportunity in Lawrence!

In August, GHF will be the recipient organization for The Community Mercantile (The Merc) **Change for Our Community program** in Lawrence, Kansas. The Change program gives Merc shoppers an opportunity to donate to local community organizations every time they visit. The Merc chooses a different recipient each month. All donations are provided by shoppers so we encourage everyone who is able to donate in August to do so.

There are three ways that you can contribute:

1. Round the amount of your order up to the next dollar. The difference will be donated to GHF.
2. Drop your spare change into the jars at the registers
3. Bring your own bag and the 5 cent bag refund will be donated to GHF.



All of the funds GHF receives will be used for our prairie preservation/restoration efforts and education about our prairie ecosystem. The more you shop and donate, the more GHF will receive for our work so please remember to donate your change in August! For more information about The Merc and the Change for Our Community program, go to <http://themerccoop.com/your-coop/donations-program>.

### Prairie Discovery Day!

Saturday, September 19th, 2015

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Rachel Snyder Prairie

Mayetta, Kansas

Join us for a party on the prairie! Prairie Discovery Day (formerly Prairie Appreciation Day) is our annual event at GHF's own Rachel Snyder Prairie and it's a great time to learn about prairies and GHF's restoration and preservation work. It's a chance to meet others interested in our native landscapes, explore the prairies and woodlands on the property, learn about the flora and fauna, and enjoy the great outdoors.



Participants gathering at a previous Prairie Day

We'll have a plant walk, some fun activities for kids and adults, and lunch - **all free of charge**. The Groundhogs (the GHF volunteer restoration team) will be working in the morning as well.

Plants you might discover at the prairie:



*Liatris aspera* button blazing star



*Gentiana puberulenta* downy gentian



Ladies tresses orchids

## How Bison Benefit Blooms by Anna Zahner

When the average person thinks of a prairie, they probably just picture a sea of grass. And not without good reason: grasses are the dominant species on prairies. However, upon closer look, you'll find that prairies are a very complicated assemblage of several hundred species of plants and animals, all struggling to survive in a place that periodically catches on fire (as if Kansas weather weren't tough enough). Though they compete with one another, and strive desperately to eat (or escape being eaten by) each other, these many species of plants and animals need each other. When even one piece of the puzzle is eliminated, its loss can cause a ripple of changes throughout the community, even affecting how many flowers you might find on a given day.



American Bison, Wikimedia Commons

Bison, despite being very large and tough, are quite picky eaters. Like your average kindergartener, they can eat their favorite foods (mostly grasses) all day, but are hard-pressed to take even a bite of plants they do not like (mostly forbs, which are non-grass, non-woody-stemmed plants like sunflowers and wild blue indigo). So when bison are missing from a prairie, as they have been missing from large tracts of Kansas prairie for many decades now, which plants are affected? Both grasses and forbs.



Ungrazed prairie in late summer

In a prairie without bison, the grasses, freed from the burden of being constantly munched on by enormous animals, can really spread their leaves and grow. Not that bison are bad for grass – prairie grasses are mostly quite accustomed to the munching and can flourish under those conditions too – but it is much easier to grow tall and dense when your leaves are not periodically removed.

Most species of forb are not generally eaten by bison, but they too can feel the loss of their large brown neighbors. How so, if the bison don't eat them? Let's compare the two habitats. Ungrazed prairie typically looks like an unbroken sea of tall, dense grass. Bison-grazed prairie, on the other hand, is a bit messier-looking: patches of tall grass mixed with shorter (recently eaten) grass, interspersed with trails made by the bison's movements. Forbs, like all plants, need light, which is much harder to access when there's a lot of tall, thick grass towering above, so they tend to do better when bison are around.

So what does all that have to do with how many flowers you can find on the prairie? Competing with the tall ungrazed grasses for light can be very stressful, leaving forbs in ungrazed prairie with less energy to make flowers. Fewer flowers mean that fewer seeds are made, and, after many years of diminished seed production, the population of that species may eventually decline. So not only do bison promote blooming by helping forbs have the energy to flower this year, they also help ensure that there will be more flowering forbs in years to come.

Visit a bison-grazed and an ungrazed prairie yourself to see the difference that bison can make!



Bison-grazed prairie, late summer.

*Anna Zahner, Division of Biology, Kansas State University, was a 2013 recipient of a Rachel Snyder Memorial Scholarship toward her graduate research "Plant responses to grazer-mediated habitat alterations in tallgrass prairie". She graduated from Kansas State University with a master's in biology earlier this year. It can be read in full at <http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/19065>. Thanks to Anna for sharing her results with us.*

## Visit a Prairie Park!

Kansas has some of the best expanses of native prairie in the nation. Although most of it is in private hands, there are several places here and in nearby states to visit that are open to the public. Each has its own special treats.

### Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

2480 Kansas 177, Strong City, KS 66869  
(620) 273-8494

<http://www.nps.gov/tapr/index.htm>

Bus tours are available Monday through Friday at 11 a.m. with additional bus tours on weekends at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Please call ahead to make a reservation. All activities are free of charge. Wet road conditions or lack of staff will be the only reason to cancel a tour. Call the rangers at 620-273-8494 (hit 0). The preserve is located in northern Chase County, Kansas, 2 miles north of intersection U.S. Hwy 50 and Flint Hills National Scenic Byway 177 (K-177) west of Strong City. Watch for brown attraction signs. There is a small bison herd visible from the trails.

If you cannot make one of the bus tours, they suggest driving the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway K-177 to view the tallgrass prairie via your own private vehicle. A Scenic Overlook area is available a few miles south of Cottonwood Falls, Kansas with waysides and benches.

### Missouri's Prairie State Park

128 NW 150th Lane, Mindenmines, MO  
(417) 843-6711

<https://mostateparks.com/park/prairie-state-park>

The park is open from sunrise to sunset year-round. Bison hikes are held the first Saturday of some months. See web site for details. They have a herd of over 100 bison. A visitor's center is available as well as hiking trails and picnic sites. Regal Tallgrass Prairie Nature Center summer hours, April through October, are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday. Closed Sunday through Tuesday and holidays.

### Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

Located west of Bartlesville and north of Pawhuska, Oklahoma 74056 Phone: (918) 287 4803

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/oklahoma/placesweprotect/tallgrass-prairie-preserve.xml>

The preserve is open every day from dawn to dusk with no charge for admittance and can be accessed via county roads. There are free ranging bison herds (over 2000 bison), scenic turnouts, hiking trails, picnic tables, information and public restrooms at the Historic Bunkhouse. The gift shop / visitor center is open from March 1 through December 15 from 10:00am to 4:00pm. It is operated by docents, and is typically open every day.

## Groundhogs



Since prairie is found now in small patches instead of vast landscapes, human intervention is needed to keep prairie as prairie. Our Groundhogs group does this work at our own Snyder Prairie about 20 miles north of Topeka. We always need volunteers for work ranging from cutting trees, lopping woodies, collecting seeds, hauling cuttings off the prairie, etc.

### Upcoming Saturdays:

**August 15, September 19, October 17, November 21**

Contact **Frank Norman** at 785-691-9748 or email him at [fjnoman@sunflower.com](mailto:fjnoman@sunflower.com) to get on the volunteer list and be informed of work day activities. **Please don't show up without contacting us, as we may need to cancel on a given workday.** Always dress for the prairie with long pants, gloves, a hat, and sturdy shoes or boots, and bring along water.

**Note:** The Property Management Committee met this year and has updated the management plans for Snyder Prairie. We continue to adjust our work to meet the goals of this plan.

## GHF Plant Sale



Photo by Daniel Lassman

A special thanks to all who purchased plants from GHF at our sale in May! With all the changes this year from past sales, we were a bit worried. But, we sold 100 more plants in less time. The rain mostly missed us. We had a wonderful group of volunteers that joined us for part of the day. We only missed one reserved order-sorry!

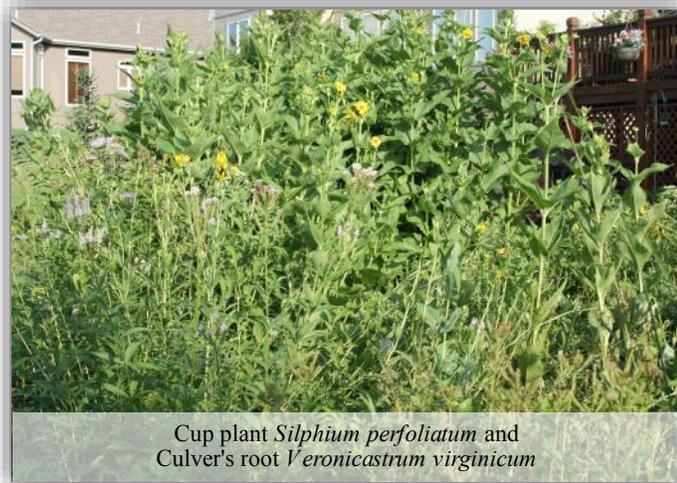
We've made note of what sold the quickest and what people requested and will use this information to make decisions next year. You can check the July 2014 newsletter for tips on growing your native plants.



Volunteer sharing prairie information and setting up for the sale. Photos by Jennifer Dropkin .

## Native Plantings Around Town by Sue Holcomb

I didn't have any submissions to feature this issue, so I thought I'd share more of my experience with native plants in my landscape. In spite of the fact that my plantings are 9 to 12 years old and very filled out, I couldn't resist buying new plants this year. I purchased from GHF's May sale and made a stop at Missouri Wildflowers Nursery in Jefferson City in June.



Cup plant *Silphium perfoliatum* and Culver's root *Veronicastrum virginicum*

I've long noticed that some of the smaller plants disappear from my gardens. My guess is that they have a hard time competing for space with some of the larger, more aggressive plants. Cup plant *Silphium perfoliatum* and Culver's root *Veronicastrum virginicum* seem to be overtaking the garden this year. All the rain we've had has also had quite an effect. This is the most lush it's been in years. A tiny plant doesn't have much of a chance.

These small plants are also more susceptible to predation by rabbits that frequent a residential neighborhood. I am still surprised that with all the heavy growth, rabbits can find, and eat to nubs, some of my favorite little plants. I saved my phlox with chicken wire this spring, but I haven't had as much luck with purple prairie-clover *Dalea purpurea*. I was doing some searching and trimming to take photos for this article, and realized they'd mostly vanished.



Purple Prairie-Clover *Dalea purpurea*

In the spring, I have a plant of hoary puccoon *Lithospermum canescens* which I never fail to "weed" around, cutting out some of the more plentiful species, but it's so hard once summer starts, to even know where it was. I've been pleasantly surprised to see it blooming on the sunny hill every spring. Since it comes up early, I have a better chance of clearing out other plants that are just coming back up.



Upright coneflower *Ratibida columnifera*

I thought I had cleared a good space for upright coneflower *Ratibida columnifera*, but once again it's gone. I fear that I may have pulled some out early, thinking it was grey-headed coneflower *Ratibida pinnata*. Bluegrass from my lawn has spread into the other spot. I have not figured out how to dig out grass without losing the forbs. I have photos of upright coneflower on the edges of mowed paths in prairies and thought the edge of the garden would be the answer, but alas, no coneflower at my house. So, I'm trying some different strategies to be able to enjoy these more diminutive beauties.

Two of my new purchases were in the Caryophyllaceae or Pink Family. I put one fire pink *Silene virginica* in an open spot that had a purple milkweed *Asclepias purpurascens* until this year. (It must have been a bad fall/winter for that species. I lost most of mine.) It looks about the same as when I planted it. The other, royal catchfly *Silene regia*, I planted in a big pot. The one in the pot has quadrupled in size and is blooming!



Fire pink *Silene virginica*

Royal catchfly *Silene regia*

I bought 3 of another plant, Great blue lobelia *Lobelia siphilitica*, put two in a pot and cleared out a weedy species for the other. Right now, they look about the same. I also put swamp milkweed *Asclepias incarnata* in a pot with some soil amendments to keep it moist, and it is doing great. It will definitely be ready next year to get in the ground; I'll just need to clear out another big space and hope for the best.

## We depend on your contributions!

Please help GHF complete its mission by sending your donation today. The date of your last contribution is printed above your name on the mailing label.

**Send to** Grassland Heritage Foundation, PO Box 394, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201.

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Rachel Snyder Memorial Scholarship Fund

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Prairie Management



### Thank you to:

*Eva and Donna Ackley, Mike Campbell, George Dick, Jennifer Dropkin, Jane and Jim Gibson, Jene Herron, Sue and Steve Holcomb, Nancy Huckeba, Matt Kirby, Daniel Lassman, Willa and Rachel*

*Myslivi, Frank Norman, Kristen Rawls, Margaret Rose, Ann Simpson, Gary Tegtmeier, Joyce and Ron Wolf, and Tasha Wolff* for volunteering during the 2015 Native Plant Sale

*Brad Guess* for volunteering his property and helping to lead part of the plant walk during the May 30th "Go Native" Restored Prairie Tour

*Craig Freeman and Frank Norman* for presenting during the final "Go Native: From Plain to Prairie" restoration workshop. *Jenica Nelson and the Douglas County Conservation District* for partnering with GHF to host the "Go Native" From Plain to Prairie" restoration workshop series

*Megan Withiam, Andrea Repinsky, and Jason Keezer,* for volunteering at the GHF booth during the Lawrence Earth Day Celebration

*Sharon Gan-Yang* for helping with the newsletter  
*Kevin Bachkora* for monthly accounting assistance  
*Kim Bellemere* for all the extra she does for GHF and to her family for sharing her with us

*Ted Abel, Myron Leinwetter, John Flavin, and Brian Roh* for assisting with the March burn

*John Flavin, Andrea Repinsky, Melvin Depperschmidt, Brian Roh, and Sierra Sage Barron* who showed up for the April burn, but did some other work. The weather has not cooperated this year!

### Special Donations since the last news:

**New Members:** Kail Marie, Jarold & Barbara Boettcher, Jim Hillesheim, Joyce Resnick, Stephen Paige, Lisa Nelick, Elizabeth Patton

**For Education:** Joyce & Ron Wolf

**For Prairie Management:** Wayne Morton

**In Honor of Gary Tegtmeier:** David Wristen

**In Honor of Larry Wagner:** Martha Wagner

**In Memory of David C. Jenkins, MD:** Gary Tegtmeier

*Kim Bellemere, our membership and education coordinator, organizes GHF's booth and needs help from area members to staff and visit with people about GHF at area events. Call her at 785-840-8104 or email grasslandheritage@gmail.com if you can assist or would like to volunteer in some other way.*

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## In Memory of Dr. Francis “Pete” Cuppage

We are sad to report the death of long-time GHF volunteer, Francis (Pete) Cuppage, MD of Mission, Kansas on February 21, 2015. Pete was born and educated in Ohio. In 1967, he joined the Department of Pathology at the University of Kansas Medical Center where he was a respected member of the faculty for 30 years, researching kidney disease. After his retirement in 1997, he became an active member of several trails organizations. He could often be seen in costume portraying a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. He willingly, and with excitement, shared his knowledge of Western Expansion with others. One of his favorite talks presented images of America “from the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam.” Pete was a dedicated teacher, and by donating his brain to science for Alzheimer’s research, his passion for education will continue. Pete is survived by his wife, Ginny, of 58 years, children and grandchildren.

Pete was a tireless volunteer for GHF. He spent many hours working at our Roulund-Wagner site in Olathe, building benches, mowing, controlling invasive species. He always encouraged us to make use of this portion of the property that remained in GHF hands after the remainder was transferred to the state. He was a board member for years and served as president. He and Ginny started the tradition of a holiday social gathering of the board. He was always a willing volunteer at tabling events, and he attended and worked at countless Groundhog days. Pete resigned from the board in 2007 and we’ve missed him.



Pete collecting seeds at Snyder Prairie

*“Consider vastness. The sea, the desert, the prairie, the polar icecaps. Where else the windswept freshness? Where else does the soul expand to grasp the breadth and reach of vastness? Destroy the prairie and you endanger the souls it would have succored. Preserve it and you afford for your descendants the timeless fount of spiritual refreshment.”* Larry Wagner, a lover of prairie and one of the founders of GHF.

To receive your newsletter in pdf form by email, contact Sue Holcomb, sholc2003@yahoo.com or 913-856-4784. Also, please let us know if you no longer wish to receive the GHF News. Thank you!