

oak

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1979

WHAT TO SEE — TREE FLOWERS

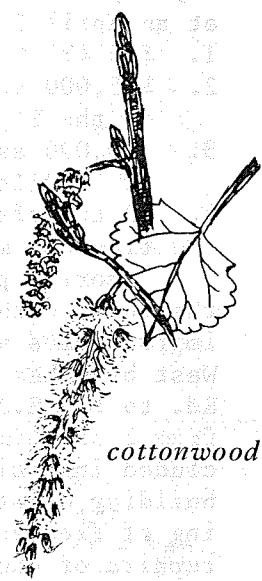
Look up, for tree flowers.

Some are showy, such as *apple* blossoms and *magnolias*. Others are equally lovely but not as noticeable. The tiny flowers of the *oak* and *buckthorn* are admired best with a magnifying glass or a hand lens.

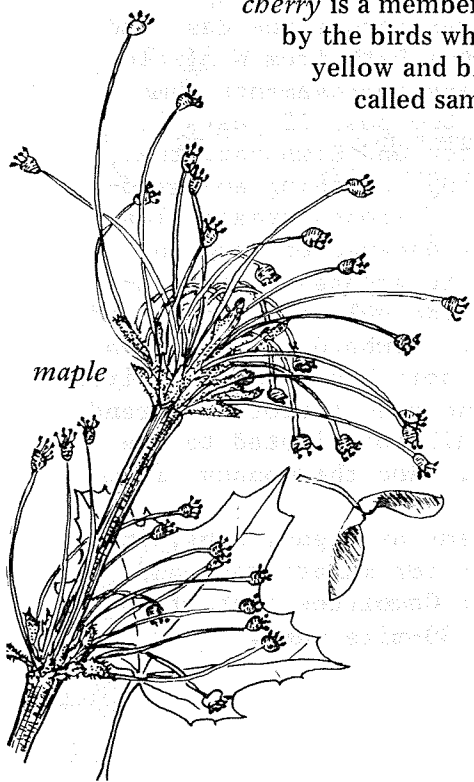
Some—for example, *willows* and *cottonwoods*--have male and female flowers on separate trees. These are called dicots--having two houses. The pussy willow in your yard is the male tree as it has the showier catkins. The willow of the Prairie Path is usually the sand willow and you will be able to find both sexes.

The *oak* is a monocot--one house--but has separate flowers. The staminate male flowers hang in clusters on long stems and the pistillate female flowers bloom where the new leaves join together. The female flower becomes the acorn.

The others usually have male and female parts in the same flower. The *choke cherry* is a member of the rose family. It and the *buckthorn* are often planted by the birds who like their dark purple fruit. *Maple* flowers are red or yellow and bloom as the leaves come out. They turn into winged seeds called samaras which sail through the air like helicopters.



cottonwood



maple



choke cherry



buckthorn



willow

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FOUNDER'S PARK BEAUTIFICATION

Fifty five new shrubs have been added to the Prairie Path Founder's Park in Wheaton, replacing plants that have died and adding to the existing landscaping. These additions are made possible by a memorial fund honoring the late May Theilgaard Watts, Prairie Path founder and by generous donations from the Seedlings Garden Club, Wheaton, and the Wheaton Garden Club. Planting was done by the City of Wheaton Forestry Department.

Originally Founder's Park was known as the Prairie Path Demonstration Area. Its landscaping and maintenance were taken on as a project by the Seedlings Garden Club soon after the signing of the lease with the County in 1966. Extending for a block between West St. and Wheaton Ave. the site had little to recommend it. The soil was poor. No water was available and it was notable for its ugliness. Funds were raised for shrubs and trees and together with their husbands and children the Seedlings accomplished an almost impossible feat. With only ordinary garden tools and their muscles a park began to emerge. Lack of space here prevents telling of the many difficulties and even disasters they encountered. Eventually they had to give up the project but not before they had established a charming park that continues to grow and flourish. Since then help has come from a friendly city government. Water has been piped in. A weed and feed program has greatly improved the lawn areas. It is mowed regularly and mushroom compost is provided for the shrub beds.

THE PRAIRIE PATH SEEKS HELP FROM THE COUNTY

Once again the Prairie Path Board of Directors has appealed to the County Highway Department for assistance. In a presentation made by Path president, Paul Mooring, at an April 27 meeting with the Highway Department Committee a request was made for:

1. \$15,495 to improve one mile of Path between Eola Rd. and Kane Co. line.
2. \$95,000 to grade, ditch, install culverts where necessary and resurface 10 miles of the Elgin branch.
3. \$36,000 as an annual appropriation in the Highway Department budget for maintenance of 18 miles of the Path in the Unincorporated areas of the County.
4. OR transfer of the Illinois Prairie Path to the Forest Preserve District for operation and maintenance.

Mooring pointed out the many improvements made on the Path since the signing of the lease with the County in 1966. In the past three years alone \$82,000 in capital improvements were made including the building of two steel bridges across the East and West branches of the DuPage river and surfacing of 3½ miles of the Path from Winfield Rd. to the E.J. & E. tracks on the Aurora branch. Funds for these improvements came from a one-time fund raising program. Additional projects over the past 13 years included initial surfacing of sections of the Path in Wayne, Wheaton and Elmhurst; the building of steps over the railroad tracks west of Prince Crossing; ditching and grading of flooded areas; many spot surface repairs; and shoring up of eroded areas; plus repairs of the bridge across the East Branch of the DuPage River because of frequent vandalism. Mooring also mentioned the cooperative action of civic groups and governmental agencies at all levels. The federal government will provide 80% of funds needed to build a bridge over Finley Rd. Lombard. Total cost \$119,473. Lombard will meet the remaining 20%. (completion of bridge expected in the fall) Illinois has built a Prairie Path underpass at Highway 59 and has also provided funds for land acquisition to extend the Path into Kane County. Municipalities along the Path have all contributed to the development and maintenance of the path within their boundaries. And the County, in 1969, surfaced most of the unincorporated areas of the Path.

While membership dues continue to support such budgeted items as signs, maps, insurance, clerical supplies, etc. little if anything is left over for maintenance and repairs. In conclusion, Mooring reminded the Highway Department Committee that if the Path were allowed to stand idle it would soon degenerate into a 30-mile dump.

PRAIRIE PATH TEMPORARILY CUT

Unknown to the Prairie Path Board a deep cut was made in the Path on the southwest branch near Wiesbrook Rd., Wheaton. Unfortunately this was necessary to allow the laying of a water main. The permit was granted by the County in 1976 but work was not started until late fall 1978. No one thought to inform the Prairie Path Board. The permit stipulated that there would be complete restoration - the berm would be properly rebuilt and the Path surface restored. Wet weather has prevented any work on restoration as yet. However, it is now anticipated that the Path will be back in usable condition in approximately a month weather permitting. In the meantime barriers are being put up to prevent accidents.

HB 2349 - A NEW THREAT TO THE ROCK ISLAND TRAIL

HB 2349 provides that Department of Conservation land in Peoria and Stark Counties (the 28 mile Rock Island Trail between Alta and Toulon) be sold to adjacent property owners. These property owners have long been hostile to the development of the trail claiming that users will resort to vandalism, littering and be harmful to farming. The Rock Island right-of-way was purchased in 1965 by the Forest Park Foundation of Peoria. President of the Foundation at the time was William Rutherford, former Director of the Illinois Conservation Department. The land was donated, in 1969, to the Department of Conservation for development as a "linear park" for hikers and cyclists. However, funding for the trail has been cut off since 1976. AND NOW HB 2349 will allow sale of the donated land - an unthinkable action and a breach of public trust. HB 2349 has already been approved by the House Executive Committee. If it passes the legislature and is signed by the governor it will mean the end of any hope for a trails system for Illinois. Should you wish to express objection to this bill write or call your own legislators and Governor Thompson asking them to oppose HB 2349. Illinois Needs trails. The state should be acquiring and developing more lands, not selling what it now has.

CLEAN - UPS REAP HUGE HAUL OF REFUSE

Lombard - lead by Board Member, Donna Albue, 19 groups swarmed over the Path filling the many bags donated by the Lombard Lions Club.

May 5 - Major clean-up on section extending west one mile from Eola Rd. Organized by Jean Mooring, 16 Path members filled a huge dumpster loaned by Fox Valley Disposal Co. and gathered four additional truck loads of Debris. Truck was available from the Illinois Construction Co. Overflow was collected by DuPage Co. Highway Dept.

REMINDER Saturday, June 2 - Bicycle hike, 19-20 miles. Meet at Members' Room, 616 Delles, Wheaton at 9:00 A.M. Participants will bike to Pratts Wayne Woods and return. Please - no children unless accompanied by an adult. Ride strenuous. Bring lunch and beverage. Questions? Call Jerry Glenn, leader, 393-1618.

PRAIRIE PATH TEE SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE

Good quality white cotton, short sleeved, knit shirts. Green trim on neck and sleeves. Prairie Path logo on left front. Sizes: Children - medium and large; Adults - small, medium and large. Extra Large special order. Each \$5 plus \$1 for handling and postage. Please send check and order to Hillside Cyclery, 4049 Washington St., Hillside, IL 60162.

Prairie Path Patches \$1 ea.

The Illinois Prairie Path - a Guide by Helen Turner. Gives history, geology of Path. Many illustrations of wild flowers, trees, animal tracks seen on the Path. Each \$1.25. For quantities of 10 to 20 \$1 each; 20 or more \$.75 each.

For Patches and Book please send order to Illinois Prairie Path, Box 1086, Wheaton, IL 60187.