

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1987

What to look for: A field of purple coneflowers

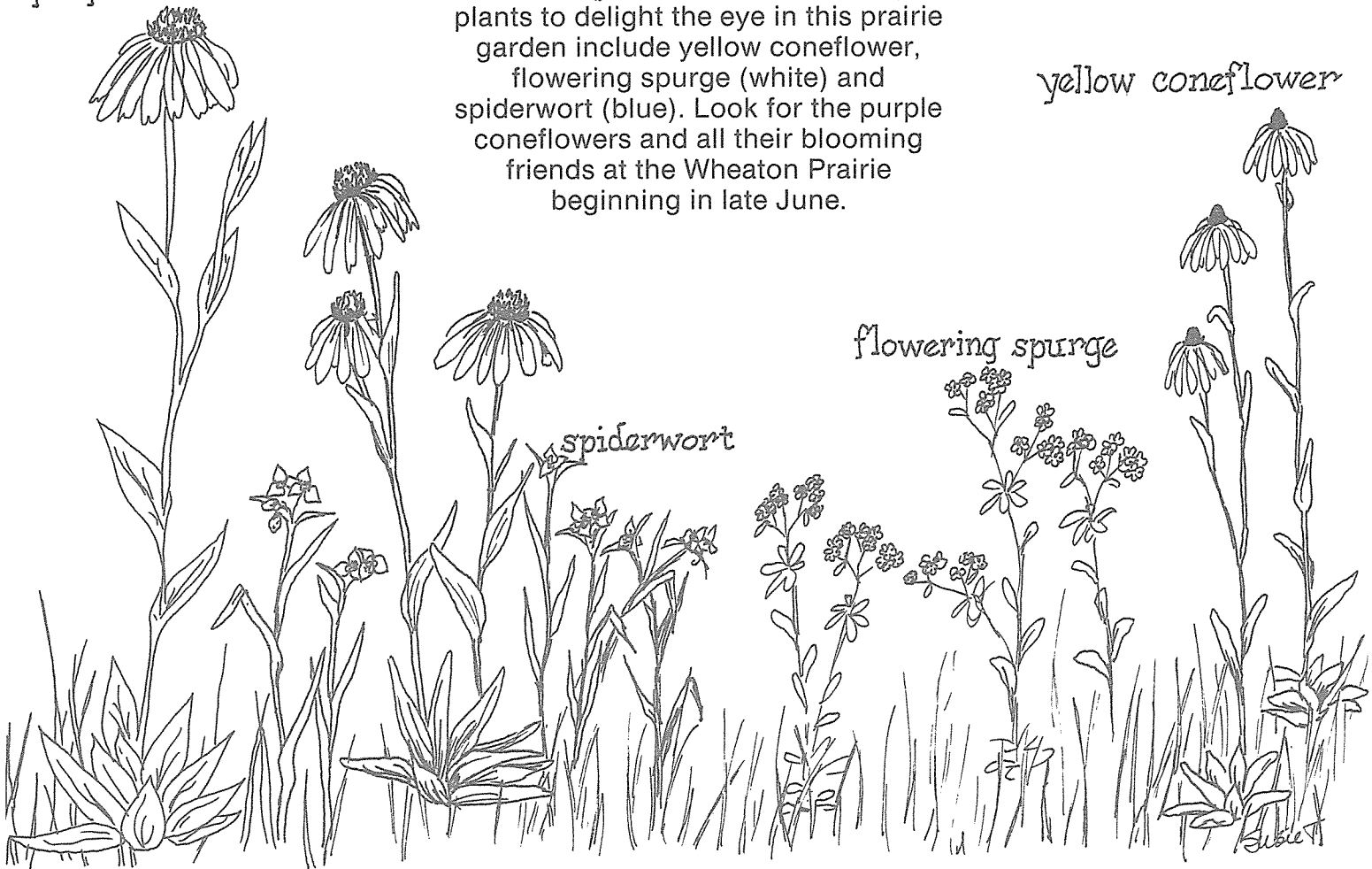
One of the most spectacular of the native plants found along the Illinois Prairie Path is pale purple coneflower, *Echinacea pallida*. Two to four feet tall, this beautiful prairie indicator plant has lower leaves which are long, tapering, parallel-veined without teeth and large daisylike flowers with swept-back pinkish-purple rays and brown center disk. The best stand of purple coneflowers on the Prairie Path grows right in Wheaton in a prairie remnant between the Chicago and North Western Railroad tracks and the Path north of Hoffman Park (just east of Hill Avenue). Other plants to delight the eye in this prairie garden include yellow coneflower, flowering spurge (white) and spiderwort (blue). Look for the purple coneflowers and all their blooming friends at the Wheaton Prairie beginning in late June.

pale
purple coneflower

yellow coneflower

flowering spurge

spiderwort



Kane County To Host First National Rails-To-Trails Conference

The first national conference of the newly-formed, Washington-based Rails-To-Trails Conservancy will be held October 7-10 at the Hotel Saratoga in North Aurora, Illinois. Major co-sponsors with RTC of this important conference are the Kane County Forest Preserve District, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, DuPage County, the National Park Service, and Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), Seattle.

The Illinois Prairie Path, famous first National Recreation Trail in Illinois, will be featured on field trips as will the beautiful Fox River Trail (located right in the backyard of the Hotel Saratoga). Other local converted railtrails to be included in the conference program are the Virgil Gilman Nature Trail, the Great Western Trail and the Green Bay Trail. The conference will present workshops on legal issues, funding, local organizing, legislation, development and maintenance, and other topics affecting conversion of railroad corridors to trails.

Among the 200 attendees expected are trail advocates and users, elected and appointed officials, trail managers, and representatives of national organizations and agencies. For more information, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to RTC Conference, Suite 400, 1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Editor's Note: A preliminary Illinois Statewide Rails-To-Trails meeting for local railtrail advocates will be held on Saturday, June 13, 9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at Illinois Central Community College in Peoria. Members and friends of the Illinois Prairie Path are invited to attend. Pre-registration is requested and includes a \$5 donation to cover lunch and other expenses. Contact Brian Puka, Program Coordinator, Illinois Natural Heritage Foundation, 320 South Third Street, Rockford, Illinois 61108, (815) 964-6666.

Spring Cleanup Poses Question: Who's in Charge Here?

April 25th was a beautiful day for the Prairie Path cleanup; and quite a few volunteers turned out in several villages, but virtually none in others. In Elmhurst, where the park district has a regular program of litter pickup and mowing along the Prairie Path, 24 boys and six leaders from Cub Scout Pack 24 were still able to fill about 20 garbage bags including a lot of broken glass. Villa Park's park department also has a regular Path maintenance program because the Path is one of that village's major parks. This is always one of the neatest sections as the Girl Scouts and Brownies discovered on their cleanup held the following week. Our thanks to Cadet troop 658, Junior Girl Scout Troops 539, 781 and 899 and Brownie Troops 379, 370, 589, and 641.

Lombard, on the other hand, considers Prairie Path maintenance to be entirely the responsibility of the DuPage County Highway Department and thus did not sponsor a Path cleanup this year. Public Works Director Richard Doherty says that the village is willing to pick up trash hauled to the various street intersections by concerned volunteers. He says Lombard wants a clear statement on Path maintenance policy from the DuPage County Division of Transportation.



Paul Mooring, Don Pellico and Bill Booth with chest-high piles of CNW railroad debris they dragged out of wetland (background).



Hope Marsh hauls brush at Taylor Avenue.

As usual, Glen Ellyn and Wheaton had the most successful cleanups. Ken Merrill of the Glen Ellyn Environmental Protection Commission recruited more than 25 volunteers, including B. R. Ryall YMCA Indian Guides, Cub Scouts from Packs 246 and 158 and several longtime Path members and friends. The hard-working groups picked up 2½ truckloads of brush, railroad tie ends, utility pole sections, building materials and many bags of trash. The Glen Ellyn Public Works Department provided a truck and one man on Saturday and a truck and front-end loader the following Monday to haul away the debris. One pleased volunteer was heard to say, "The Path in Glen Ellyn has never looked better!"

Mark Smith, representing the Wheaton Environmental Improvement Commission, and Bob Hargis, on behalf of the Prairie Path board of directors, coordinated and personally worked on the cleanup in Wheaton and on portions of the Elgin Branch and Aurora Branch as well. Because the Girl Scouts were celebrating their 75th anniversary in Chicago that day only Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts turned out this year. Participating were: Boy Scout Troops 395 and 54 (Troop 34 was to work the following week); and Cub Scout Packs 61, 317, and 369. Several public-spirited individuals also lent a hand, including a group of six from Briarcliff who had had such a good time last year they decided to do it again. Mark