

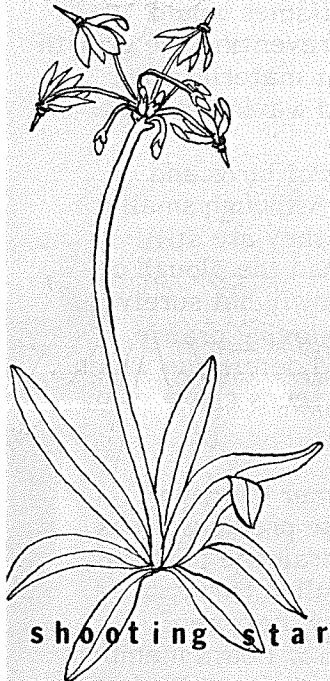
# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Summer 1981

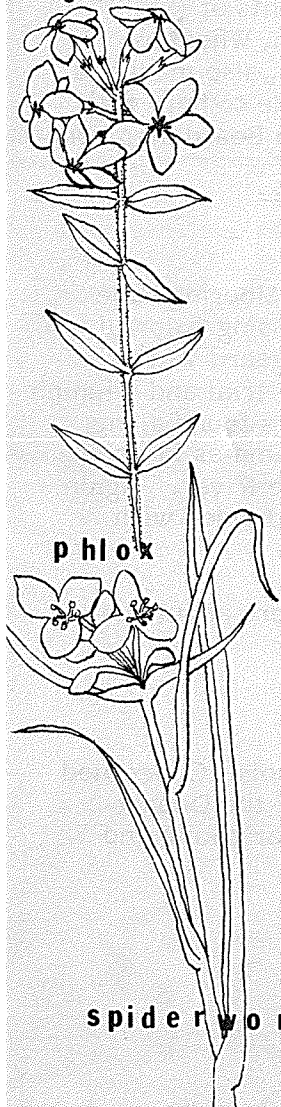
## What to look for - Prairie flowers

This summer and in the fall we will be looking for prairie flowers. The Prairie Path is an excellent place to look for these native American plants because most of it is virgin soil. The Government gave the railroads every other section of land along the right of way to encourage western expansion. The railroad went before the farmer and his steel plow especially in the northern part of the U.S. Prairie plants are deep rooted perennials who can survive almost anything except the plow or the bulldozer. The efforts of the Prairie Path members to reclaim prairie remnants by cutting trees which shade these sun loving plants and burning to get rid of old grass and weeds will make our prairie plants more visible.

Early summer the shooting star, *Dodecatheon meadii*, is a pink or white beauty resembling the hot-house cyclamen. The lavender blue blossoms of the prairie phlox, *Phlox pilosa*, last longer than their woodland cousins. Large clumps of spiderwort, *Tradescantia ohiensis*, can be seen by late June with blue flowers and sticky stems. Stiff coreopsis, *Coreopsis palmata*, with its divided leaves and yellow flowers blooms with the purple coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*, showing us how colorful the prairie was by the first of July. Prairie clover, *Petalostemen purpurea*, has tiny purple flowers on a long head. There is also a white variety. Beebalm, *Monarda fistulosa*, a lavender mint with square stems is common along the Path. The stately anemone, *Anemone canadensis*, grows in tall colonies with lovely white petals, golden centers and two fuzzy leaves clasping its stem. How many can you find?

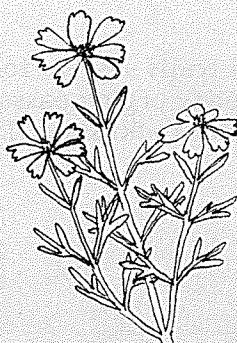


shooting star

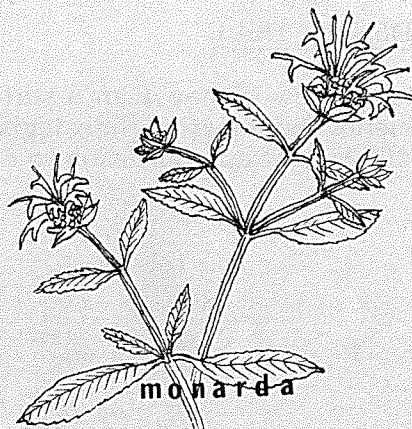


phlox

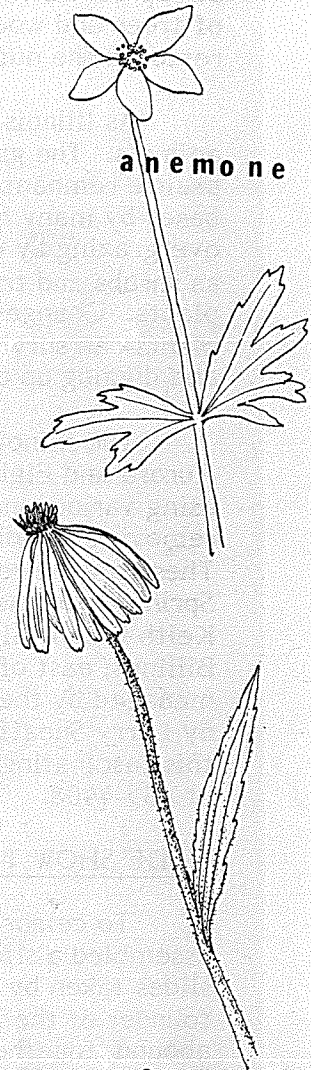
spiderwort



coreopsis

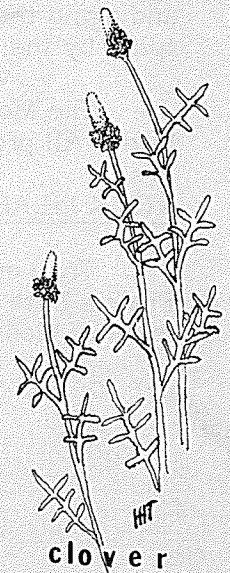


monarda



anemone

cone  
flower



clover

## SAVING OUR PRAIRIE REMNANTS

Tall-grass prairies, sustained in their diversity by frequent fires, once covered most of Illinois. Except for the tough bur oak, trees could not grow in the prairies because the fires kept them in check. Whether started by lightning or escaping Indian camp fires, the wind-blown flames would sweep across the land, not damaging the deep-rooted prairie grasses and forbs but preventing the growth of trees and woody shrubs. Fire also burned off the smothering carpet of dead plant material and restored the nutrients to the soil, making the prairie a vast bright sea of flowers and waving grasses.

As Illinois was settled, the magnificent prairies vanished with their multitudes of birds and animals. The grasslands were ploughed, the wetlands drained, and the fires ended. Although small prairie remnants linger in such places as railroad rights-of-way and old cemeteries, they are still beset by many hazards. The bulldozer is a modern hazard, even more destructive than the plough or overgrazing by cattle. Natural succession is another, which will destroy a prairie slowly but surely as shrubs and trees like sumac, buckthorn and boxelder shade and crowd out the sun-loving prairie plants. Changes in drainage patterns and adjacent land use will alter the habitat and determine which plants can survive. People can ruin a prairie by trampling it, picking the flowers so seeds can't form, and digging up and removing the plants.

The Illinois Prairie Path has custody of several prairie remnants along the former Chicago Aurora and Elgin Railway. We are trying to minimize the hazards and preserve these precious areas using various management techniques: preventing adverse changes in land use and drainage patterns, removing invading weeds and woody growth, planting seeds and seedlings, and controlled burning. These prairie remnants are found along the Path in various places, such as: Elmhurst, between Spring Road and Salt Creek, where a burn was held on April 14th under the direction of Board member Keith Olson; Glen Ellyn at Taylor Avenue, planted and managed by Genbard West students of Rick Billings; east of College Avenue in Wheaton, managed by Larry Sheaffer; Lincoln Marsh, Wheaton, managed by the Wheaton Park District; southeast of North Avenue, rural West Chicago, also managed by Larry Sheaffer and burned in the fall of 1980. Path members and friends are welcome to help with this fascinating and enjoyable preservation work. Call Larry Sheaffer, our newest Path Board member, at 665-4408.

## SLIDE SHOW TELLS PRAIRIE PATH HISTORY

To celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Illinois Prairie Path, Paul and Jean Mooring have assembled a slide show, which depicts the history of the Path from the earliest days. Using colorful slides taken by themselves and others, the Moorings introduce to the viewer May Theilgaard Watts, founder of the Path, and her good friend and Path co-founder, Helen Turner. Scenes of trial and triumph abound, together with charming vistas and pictures of many of the beautiful wildflowers found along the Path. The section called "The Saga of the Bridge" combines humor, pathos, and drama as Prairie Path friends struggle valiantly to maintain a bridge over the East Branch of the DuPage River. Again and again the show proves that May Watts was right when she wrote, "Footpaths are defended with spirit by their users."

The Moorings are glad to present this program to groups interested in learning more about the Path. All proceeds are donated to the Prairie Path Development Fund.

## ROCK ISLAND TRAIL NEEDS OUR HELP

Trail enthusiasts should act now if they want a state-owned trails system for Illinois. Concerned Prairie Path members and friends should write their legislators today urging passage of the Department of Conservation \$200,000 budget appropriation to develop the Rock Island Trail for hiking and

bicycling. If the appropriation fails, this famous state-owned linear park will probably be sold, thus betraying the trust of the generous citizens who purchased an abandoned railroad right-of-way near Peoria some nine years ago and gave it to the people of Illinois to be developed as the model for rails to trails conversion.

Since the appropriation faces the greatest opposition in the Senate, letters to our state senators are especially needed. Be sure to stress the tourist dollars that will remain in Illinois instead of being spent in Wisconsin or Michigan. Address: The Hon. John Doe  
Illinois Senate  
State House  
Springfield, IL 62706

Senators who should be told how much their constituents enjoy and need trails like The Illinois Prairie Path and the Great Western Trail are: John Friedland, Dist. 2, Elgin; John Grotberg, Dist. 38, St. Charles; Forest Etheredge, Dist. 39, Aurora; James Philip, Dist. 40, Elmhurst; Jack Bowers, Dist. 41, Downers Grove.

#### LILLIAN A. LASCH

The Illinois Prairie Path lost one of its most loyal supporters with the unexpected death of Lillian Lasch on April 27th. Lil was one of the founders of the Path and its first Membership Chairman. She courageously continued to serve in that position from her home in Morton Grove even after she resigned from the Board of Directors for reasons of health in January. In addition to her vital membership duties, she had been Chairman of the Cook County Committee during the Path's early years and at the time of her resignation was Chairman of the Board of Directors.

Lil's activities and interests were wide-ranging, including prairie preservation, hiking and canoeing, the Prairie Club and the Loners on Wheels Club, classes and study groups at the Morton Arboretum, and travel to far-away places. She leaves a host of friends who will miss her cheerful, generous, "can-do" spirit. In her memory the Prairie Path Board of Directors has established the Lillian A. Lasch Memorial Fund to be used for a special Path development project in Cook County. Her work, helping others, will go on.

#### WINFIELD KNOLLS DRAINAGE PROJECT

What's happening to the Path east of County Farm Road? We have heard this question many times during the past few weeks from anxious Path users. The DuPage County Highway Department, which has jurisdiction over the entire CA and E right-of-way has the answer: an enlarged drainage ditch to accommodate storm water from the Winfield Knolls storm sewer recently installed along Peter Road. The Highway Department has promised to fill, grade, and resurface with limestone screenings the disturbed section of Path as a part of the project, thus eliminating our perennial drainage problem in that area. Just be patient, folks, they have told us; the job will be finished this year.

#### PATH IMPROVED FOR CYCLISTS

On April 11th and 18th a hard-working crew of Path members and friends re-graded the approaches to the bridge over the East Branch of the DuPage River and installed a new limestone surface shored up by railroad ties. Another equally dedicated group wielding picks and shovels cut down the steep clay and gravel embankment west of Hill Avenue to make access easier for bicyclists. They also constructed retaining walls of railroad ties and improved the surface with limestone screenings. In all, 30 tons of screenings and 27 ties were installed by hand. The two projects cost \$521.90, contributed to the Path by members as annual dues. It is hoped that more Path users who are cyclists will support the Path with memberships and help on work days so that we can continue to improve the Path for bicycling.



SPRING ACTIVITIES, Rain or Shine

- Sunday, June 7 - Hike to Geneva. Meet at 9:00 a.m., West Chicago, North Western train station. (Train gets in at 8:52.) We will have lunch along the Fox River while watching the annual Fox River canoe race. We can hike or take the train back. Leader: Dick Wilson.
- Saturday and Sunday, June 13 and 14 - Prairie Path Appreciation Days. 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Path Board members and friends will staff booths along the Path to meet the public and promote memberships. If you have a question or comment, here's your chance to tell us!

PRAIRIE PATH TEE SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE

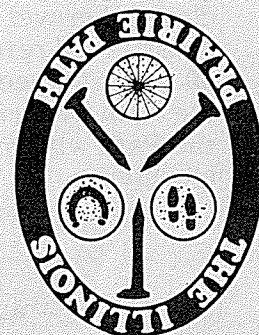
- Good quality white cotton, short sleeved, knit shirts. Green trim on neck and sleeves. Prairie Path logo on left front. Sizes: Children - medium and large; Adults - small, medium and large. Extra Large, special order. Each \$5 plus \$1 for handling and postage. Please send check and order to Hillside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

- Prairie Path Patches \$1 each.

- 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 books please send order to Illinois Prairie Path, Box 1086, Wheaton, Illinois 60187.

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RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

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