

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

FALL 1987

What to look for: Compass Plant and its *Silphium* sisters

The Compass Plant belongs to the *Silphium* genus of the very large *Compositae* family. The *Compositae*, which are considered the most highly-evolved plants, are characterized by florets arranged in dense heads to form what appear to be single flowers. Sunflowers, asters and dandelions also belong to this family.

Tall and stately, the Compass Plant, *Silphium laciniatum*, has yellow flowers in bloom from July to September and very large, stiff, rough-bristly and deeply-cleft leaves which alternate on the stem. It grows from four to ten feet high in the prairies of North Dakota, Minnesota, and Michigan south. The flat leaves tend to orient themselves so that the narrow axis points north and south. Hence the name "Compass Plant".

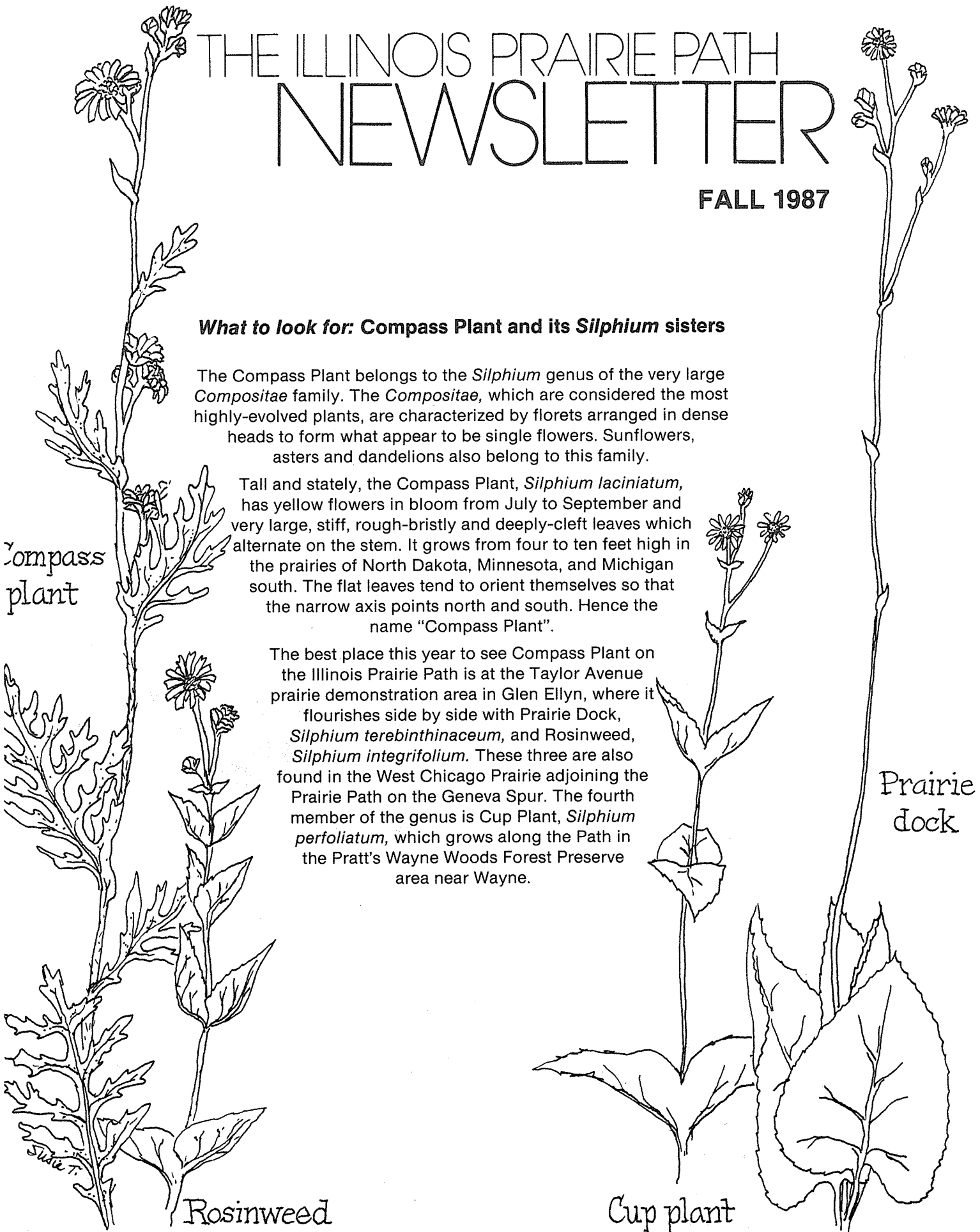
The best place this year to see Compass Plant on the Illinois Prairie Path is at the Taylor Avenue prairie demonstration area in Glen Ellyn, where it flourishes side by side with Prairie Dock, *Silphium terebinthinaceum*, and Rosinweed, *Silphium integrifolium*. These three are also found in the West Chicago Prairie adjoining the Prairie Path on the Geneva Spur. The fourth member of the genus is Cup Plant, *Silphium perfoliatum*, which grows along the Path in the Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve area near Wayne.

Compass
plant

Prairie
dock

Rosinweed

Cup plant



RIGHT ON, DUPAGE COUNTY

With a million-dollar budget for maintenance of the Illinois Prairie Path in 1987, the DuPage County Division of Transportation has made many major improvements this year. To enhance safety and visibility thousands of county man-hours have been devoted to pruning trees during the winter and early spring and regular mowing in the growing season. In addition, most parts of the Path have now been resurfaced with limestone screenings and a few short problem sections have been blacktopped. A new 2½-mile stretch of the Geneva Spur has been surfaced for the first time; and now Prairie Path fans confidently await the great day when the whole 8½-mile-long Geneva Spur will be reconnected at last to the Elgin Branch of the Illinois Prairie Path on the east and to the Fox River Trail on the west. For twenty years our Prairie Path maps have shown the Geneva Spur of the old CA & E Railway as a potential section of the Prairie Path; and now we truly believe it is about to happen, thanks to farsighted members of the DuPage County Board.



DuPage County DOT crew widens Path between Montclair and Park, Glen Ellyn.



Cyclists ride south from Bilter Road on IPP Batavia Spur bypass completed this summer by DuPage County DOT.

Another dream did come true this summer when the DuPage County DOT finished surfacing the Batavia Spur bypass, located partly on the Northern Illinois Gas Company right-of-way along the north side of the East-West Tollway and partly on an easement donated by a private developer. This new section provides a safe alternative to the dangerous Batavia Junction detour on Eola Road. It was first proposed by Prairie Path board members Phoebe and George Ryerson (he was a vice president of NI-Gas) about 1970 and has been shown as a potential Prairie Path section on many of our maps ever since.

Delighted Path users have been discovering these improvements and commenting on them to our board members. We add our voices to the chorus of praise and thanks. Three cheers for DuPage County!

KANE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT DEVELOPS SEPARATE HORSE TRAIL

Equestrians and bicyclists can now happily coexist on the Illinois Prairie Path Batavia Spur in Kane County. User conflicts over droppings and horse-caused damage to the limestone surface versus sometimes excessive speed of cyclists are inevitable when two essentially incompatible types of users are forced to share an eight-foot-wide trail. The Kane County Forest Preserve District has now solved the problem on its section of the Batavia Spur between Butterfield Road and Glenwood Park, Batavia, to the satisfaction of all. The answer: a clearly-marked, six-foot-wide mowed horse trail winding through the woods parallel to the limestone bicycle trail but separated from it by a vegetated strip from ten to thirty feet wide. The Prairie Path board of directors applauds this excellent resolution of a perennial problem and recommends it whole heartedly to the DuPage County Division of Transportation.



Hart Road near Batavia. Mowed horse trail at right; limestone bicycle/hiking trail at left.

BOARD CHANGES

Path President Paul Mooring announces with regret the resignations of two valued board members: Ray Nelson, devoted longtime corresponding secretary and office manager; and Dee Tevonian, membership chair who, with her husband Ron, has also maintained for several years the computerized mailing list. Ray now has more time for his family and his many other civic and recreational interests and Dee will be able to concentrate on her new computer list business as an entrepreneur. Both will be missed and we wish them well.

Replacing Ray Nelson on the board is Esther Ann Cryderman, Wheaton, artist-illustrator with a strong interest in botany who holds a B.A. degree from Spring Arbor College, Michigan, where she majored in biology and minored in art. She has taught art, illustrated health textbooks and health education materials used by the YMCA, and designed a logo for national Y cardiovascular fitness programs. She and her husband, who is an editor at Christianity Today magazine, are both "hooked on the Illinois Prairie Path" and enjoy bicycling on it with their four young children.

A replacement for Dee has not yet been found, and the search is on for a new membership chair.

NEW LOCATION FOR FIRST NATIONAL RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONFERENCE

The first national Rails-to-Trails Conference will be held October 8-10 in Naperville, Illinois, at the Sheraton Hotel (instead of in North Aurora as previously announced).

Bicyclists, hikers and conservationists are invited to join with park managers, urban planners, and government officials to learn how to save abandoned rail corridors, develop them into recreational trails, and manage them.

Highlights of the program will include presentations by author William Whyte; William Mott, director of the National Park Service; Edwin Schwinn, president of the Schwinn Bicycle Company; and Gilbert Grosvenor, president of the National Geographic Society.

Workshop sessions and field trips on the Illinois Prairie Path and Fox River Trail will fill out the program. There will be a Friday evening banquet at the Paramount Arts Center in Aurora.

For complete information and a registration form please contact the host Chicagoland Bicycle Federation c/o Sue Ulrey, 634 Harvard Lane, Libertyville, IL 60048 (312) 367-8669, or Suzan Pinsof, Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, 400 W. Madison, Chicago, IL 60606 (312) 454-0400.

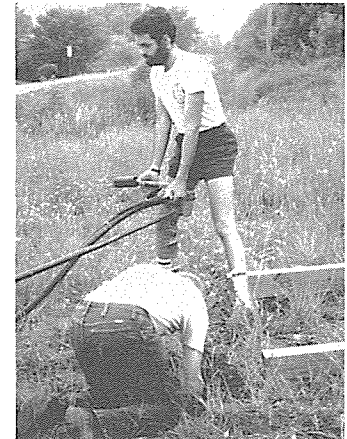
DISPLAY CASES INSTALLED ALONG PATH

On the June 20 work day, Illinois Prairie Path members installed the first of a planned series of rustic wood sign structures beside the trail at the intersection of Geneva Road and County Farm Road. Designed and built by Paul Mooring, the structure cost \$977.67, including \$685 for the bronze-colored aluminum three-foot-by-four-foot display case with lexan door which was manufactured especially for the Prairie Path by Davson Company, Itasca, and \$200 for trucking and auger, A-1 All American Services, Glen Ellyn. On the July 25 work day a second sign was installed at the east end of the new Batavia Spur bypass where it meets the Aurora Branch north of the East-West Tollway. A third is planned for Main Street, Glen Ellyn, north of the Savings and Loan; others will be added as needed.

The volunteers at the June work day were pleasantly startled to see a long-absent face grinning at them atop a Let's Build the Bridge T-shirt. It was none other than Phil Hodge of Volunteer Bridge fame, who had moved to Beaver, Pennsylvania, many months ago to start his own engineering consulting firm. "But what are you doing HERE?" blurted one bemused volunteer. "Well, it's a work day, isn't it?" answered Phil with perfect Hodgian logic as he started in on the job at hand. Further research revealed that he was in the Chicago area for his high school reunion and knew the work day would be a good chance to see some of his old Prairie Path friends too.



IPP members wrestle sign into place at east end of Batavia Spur bypass. (East-West Tollway bridge in background).



Phil Hodge (standing) and Bob Hargis position auger to dig postholes for sign at Geneva Road.

THANK YOU, WHEATON

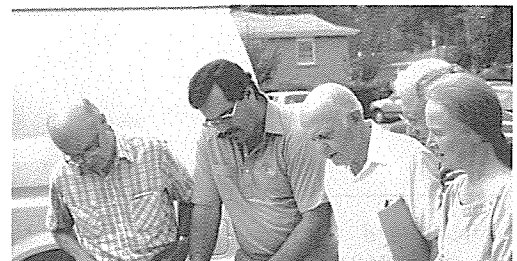
In August the City of Wheaton Public Works Department eliminated part of a longstanding problem area on the Illinois Prairie Path in the parking lot between Main and Hale. Cooperating on the project were DuPage County, owner of the parking lot property, and the neighboring Chicago and North Western Railroad, which allowed the city to reconstruct the Prairie Path on portions of its right-of-way as well. City crews installed a concrete walk, eight feet wide, along the north side of the parking lot with ramps leading up to Main and Hale and an attractive retaining wall of native limestone. Decorative wrought iron fencing will soon be added to the wall to complete the project. Total cost for materials and labor will be approximately \$60,000, according to Public Works Director Joe Knippen.

The Prairie Path is now clearly defined and separated from traffic in this parking lot; Path users look forward to a comparable improvement in the lot just east of Main in the not-too-distant future as the city continues to upgrade and beautify the downtown area.

PATH TO BE SURFACED IN COOK COUNTY!

At the Illinois Prairie Path board meeting in August the board voted unanimously to concur in and approve a Letter of Understanding previously signed by Mark Frech, Director, Illinois Department of Conservation, and James J. Holzgart, General Manager, DuPage Water Commission. President Paul Mooring and Cook County Committee Chairman Len Chabala were authorized to sign on behalf of the board. This document states that IDOC, owner of the Cook County segment of the Illinois Prairie Path, agrees to grant to the Commission a right-of-way on the Prairie Path for the proposed Lake Michigan water pipeline; in return the Commission is required to construct on the Illinois Prairie Path a hiking-biking trail in accordance with IDOC specifications and standards as far as the Des Plaines River and to contribute prior to construction a sum of money to a special Departmental maintenance funding account for the Path. The Department agrees to hold the Commission harmless with respect to any trails installed by the Commission as part of its restoration of the Path.

Editor's note: All parties are to be congratulated on this breakthrough. For the Illinois Prairie Path it's a wish fulfilled after more than twenty years of waiting. Our only regret is that the late Lillian Lasch, one of our founding board members and the first to champion the Cook County connection, did not live to see her bright hope become reality.



Kevin Sronce, (second from left), Illinois Department of Conservation, shows site plan for Lake Michigan water pipeline segments on Prairie Path to IPP board members Bob Hargis, Paul Mooring, Len Chabala and Jean Mooring in Hillside.