

THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Fall, 1996



Canada
goldenrod

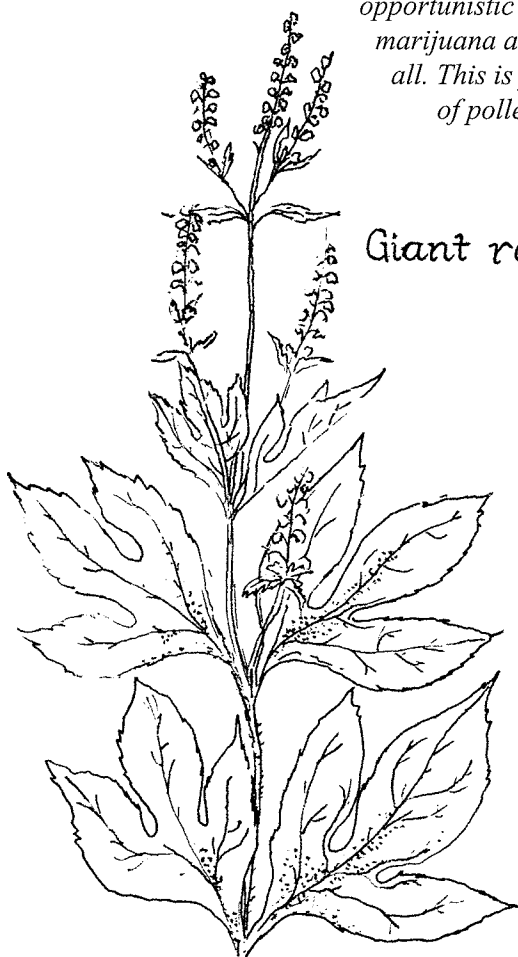
Plants To Watch Out For: Giant and Common Ragweed

It's hay fever time again and sufferers have to endure sniffles and sneezes brought on by pollen in the air. Although some people mistakenly believe that the many species of goldenrod with their showy yellow flowers are the principal source of hay fever allergens, this has been shown to be a bum rap. The major villains in our area are two species of ragweed, giant and common, whose inconspicuous greenish flowers bloom at the same time as the beautiful goldenrod. The goldenrods, therefore, often take the blame for the harm done by their nefarious comrades.

The giant variety of ragweed, an alien European weed, can reach a height of eight to ten feet or more and has large, slightly hairy leaves with usually three lobes or occasionally five. Male flowers are in spikelike clusters on the tips of branches and stems while the female flowers are borne in the axils of the upper leaves.

The common variety is a native weed widespread throughout North America, seldom growing more than three feet tall, with leaves deeply cut into many lobes. It also bears separate male and female flowers.

Regrettably, ragweed is found all along the Illinois Prairie Path because it is an opportunistic plant which rapidly colonizes disturbed soil. Although there is a rumor that marijuana also grows everywhere along the Path, plant experts have not reported any at all. This is probably just a case of ragweed being mistaken for cannabis — a problem of pollen not pot.



Giant ragweed

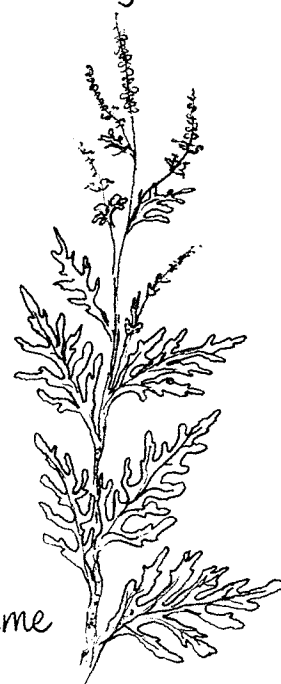


Cannabis
(marijuana, hemp)



enlarged portion of
ragweed flower raceme

Common ragweed



THANK YOU, DUPAGE COUNTY!

The DuPage County Division of Transportation has made 1996 a banner year for major improvements to the regional trail system. Trailfans can all agree with former DuPage County Board Chairman Jack Knuepfer, who said at our Grand Celebration of Trails on June 1 that we owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the county board for their outstanding support of our famous trail system over the years.

The Illinois Prairie Path has benefitted from four important improvements this year:

1. The nine-mile IPP Geneva Spur was connected at last to the rest of the Prairie Path via an attractive 60-foot-long Cor-Ten steel bridge over the West Branch of the DuPage River and a one-half mile extension of the trail through the Winfield Mounds Forest Preserve, and along Geneva Road to County Farm Road. Total cost of the project; including the bridge, was \$244,000 and the contractor was Sebastian Contracting Corporation of Burr Ridge. Tim Dawson was the project engineer on behalf of the DPCDOT.

2. The IPP Elgin Branch now crosses the Great Western Trail at grade west of Prince Crossing Road, and the steep climb over the railroad embankment has been eliminated. The project, completed in August, included removing the old bridge abutments, drainage modifications, grading, resurfacing the Path, and seeding the embankments with grass. Total cost was \$165,000, and the contractor was

Dominic's Trucking of Streamwood. Paul Krueger was the engineer for the DPCDOT.

3. The IPP Aurora Branch now has a beautiful 430-foot bridge to carry the trail over busy Eola Road, which has been widened to four lanes. The bridge cost \$736,000 and opened on National Trails Day, June 1. The contractor was Herlihy Mid-Continent Company, Romeoville. Engineer for the county was Paul Krueger.

4. The IPP Batavia Spur has been shortened some 500 feet by the construction of an underpass under the new bridge that carries widened Eola Road over the East-West Tollway, I-88. Although this underpass cost only \$5,000, it is extremely important to the safety of Path users because it eliminates a hazardous at-grade crossing of Eola Road. The contractor was K-Five Construction, Lemont; and Paul Krueger supervised the project for the DPCDOT.

DuPage County's other long-distance trail, the Great Western, is being improved by the county's most ambitious trail project to date, the long-awaited bridge over the North-South Tollway, I-355. The length of the double span bridge will be 243 feet and the cost of this vital trail link is \$1.4 million. The contractor is Herlihy Mid-Continent Co., Romeoville, and the engineer for the DPCDOT is Paul Krueger. Completion is expected by the end of October. Pictures of these projects are on pages 6 and 7.

OUR VOLUNTEERS HAVE BEEN KEEPING BUSY

Besides working on the year's two major projects, the National Trails Day events and the annual spring cleanup, our volunteers have been doing many other tasks to benefit the Prairie Path, including restoring prairies, replacing signs, repairing benches, leading bike rides and bird walks, bringing in new members, and monitoring the trail. The year's activities have included:

1. Prairie work days.

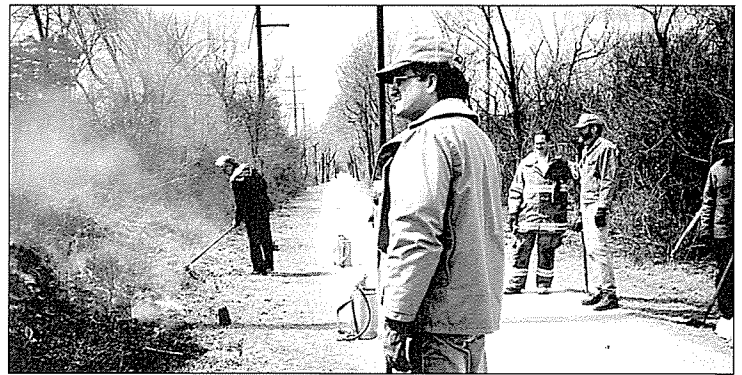
February 17. Elmhurst Great Western Prairie restoration, mainly brush clearing, led by Keith Olson.

March 16. IPP North Avenue Prairie, brush clearing. Approximately thirty participants for this very productive day included several IPP members as well as members of the Nature Conservancy Stewardship Group. A mailing to members in the general area of the prairie was sent out by Steve and Linda Plumb and boosted attendance. A few days later Larry Sheaffer burned the prairie, which then looked good all summer.

March 30. West Chicago Prairie, removal of monster bushes, mainly treelike honeysuckle, from the south

side of the Geneva Spur right-of-way just west of Jack Knuepfer Bridge. There were some aching backs that night!

April 6. IPP Volunteer Prairie and President Street Prairie, Wheaton. A very successful prairie burn with no wind and plenty of dry material to generate a good flame. Three Wheaton firemen supervised the burn.



Eric Keeley (center) and other volunteers help control burn at President Street Prairie supervised by Wheaton fireman (to Eric's right).



Keith Olson lights fire for controlled burn at President Street Prairie, Wheaton.

August 17. IPP Volunteer Prairie, cutting of ragweed.

Volunteer workers on one or more of the prairie work days included Eric Keeley and his son Sam, Bill Gunderson, Dick and Nancy Wilson, David and Benna Tate, Paul and Jean Mooring, Paul Aeschleman and Steve Plumb.

2. The spring bird walk at Pratt's

Wayne Woods Forest Preserve on May 18 was led by Nancy and Dick Wilson and Paul Mooring. The trees were full of warblers and it was a perfect day for viewing. Some fifteen persons attended.



"What bird is that?" Bird walk participants at Pratt's Wayne Woods, May 18.

3. On July 20 several IPP members moved the display case stand from Industrial Drive on the Geneva Spur in West Chicago, where it had been repeatedly vandalized, to the west end of the Geneva Spur near its junction with the Fox River Trail just north of Bennett Park, Geneva. We plan to have IPP logo signs with arrows pointing to Wheaton installed here in the near future.

4. Two bike rides.

July 14. Originally scheduled for the IPP Main Stem and Brookfield Zoo via the Salt Creek Trail, the itinerary was changed to the Virgil L. Gilman Trail in Kane County by those participants who showed up. "The Gilman Trail is excellent," reports Leader Paul Aeschleman.

August 11. David Tate (substituting for Paul Aeschleman) led an enjoyable round trip on the IPP Aurora Branch, Fox River Trail, and IPP Geneva Spur. They visited an eclectic art fair in Aurora along the Fox River Trail on the west side of the river.

5. One-man miniproject. On July 22, Paul Mooring rescued the salvageable parts of the often-vandalized bench at Lake Arrowhead on the Aurora Branch in Wheaton. In their latest attack the vandals had burned and cut the wood boards on the seat and back, had bent the heavy steel frame, and pulled out of the ground the entire structure with a hundred pounds of concrete



Paul Mooring dismantles vandalized bench near Lake Arrowhead. Large concrete block (right) will have to substitute for bench.

footings attached. The IPP board has decided to repair the bench and install it somewhere else along the Path. Path users who want to sit on something and rest at Lake Arrowhead will have to be content with the nearby large concrete block, left by the old CA&E Railroad.



Tom May and Paul Aeschleman help disassemble display case stand at Industrial Drive prior to moving it to Geneva.



Nancy Wilson and David Tate help reassemble display case stand near Bennett Park at west end of Geneva Spur.

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT BUILDS A BIKE TRAIL

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has started work on the long-awaited connector trail along County Farm Road, which will link the Illinois Prairie Path, Kline Creek Farm in the Timber Ridge Forest Preserve, and the Great Western Trail. The new trail, designed to meet state bikeway standards, will be ten feet wide and surfaced with limestone screenings. The total length of the new trail segment is 4,382 feet and it will run north from the Prairie Path to an existing gravel service road, which in turn connects to the Great Western Trail. The project also includes a 70-foot

pedestrian bridge over a small tributary of Klein Creek, plus trail signage. Total cost is \$221,000, of which 80% is an IDOT-administered ISTE grant of \$155,760 and 20% is a matching fund from the Forest Preserve District in the amount of \$65,240. The matching fund actually comes from the DuPage County Division of Transportation as partial reimbursement for impacts on forest preserves by county road improvement projects. The contractor is Maneval Construction Co., Inc., Grayslake. Completion is expected by the end of October.

KUDOS FOR NATIONAL TRAILS DAY VOLUNTEERS

The Illinois Prairie Path board of directors would like to thank the following members and friends, volunteers and staunch trail supporters all, for their contributions to the success of the final trek along the Illinois Prairie Path and the Grand Celebration of National Trails Day at Reed-Keppler Park in West Chicago on June 1:

- *Paul Aeschleman* — coordinated final day's events including police protection at major intersections, photography, donations from area merchants, rest stops, appearances of public officials, trail marking, advertisement and publicity, media coverage, interface with Grand Illinois Adventure Team and interface with the organizers of the Grand Celebration in West Chicago. These efforts helped produce a safe, publicized, and well-attended event.
- *Nancy Becker* — assisted with the setup of the rest stops in Maywood, Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, and Wheaton. The rest stops provided refreshments and drinks for the Adventurers and also gave the public an opportunity to learn more about the Grand Illinois Trail and to purchase IPP maps, literature and merchandise.
- *Patricia Feeley* — assisted with the setup of the rest stops in Maywood, Elmhurst, Glen Ellyn, and Wheaton. In addition, Tricia helped manage the IPP booth at the Grand Celebration.
- *Steve Plumb of the Elmhurst Park District* — helped coordinate the Spring Road activities and supplied the portable band shell for the musicians and speakers at Reed-Keppler Park.
- *Dick and Nancy Wilson* — organized and led a National Trails Day hike from the intersection of the IPP and County Farm Road along the just-completed Geneva Spur to West Chicago. They arrived in time to join in the festivities.

- *Susan Wisniewski* — coordinated trail cleanup efforts in Bellwood, and produced a new set of IPP T-shirts. Prior to the Grand Adventure several sections of the IPP were impassable; but thanks to the efforts of Susan and the Bellwood Department of Public Works, all of these obstacles were removed by June 1.

The following IPP board members rode the entire 22-mile length of the final day's adventure: Paul Aeschleman, Eric Keeley, and David Tate. John Kacich rode from Maywood to Elmhurst.

Our thanks to all!



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of The IPP board of directors I wish to extend my sincere thanks to you, our members, for your support of the Illinois Prairie Path. With your help we have been able to develop, fund, and implement numerous projects and events along the entire trail system over the years. Many of our current projects are listed elsewhere in this *Newsletter*. In order to continue to expand these efforts WE NEED YOUR HELP.

Illinois Prairie Path — Help Wanted Section

IPP Board Members. The board of directors has openings for two new board members. As a board member you will participate in the planning and implementation of all IPP events and campaigns. This is a great way to help direct the future efforts of your organization. The board of directors meets in the evening on the first Tuesday of every month in the Members' Room at Rathje Park, Wheaton.

IPP Volunteers. We are currently in the process of updating our list of active members who are available to volunteer time to support IPP activities. These may include maintenance and prairie restoration, bicycle rides and nature hikes, and publicity events.

Note: We recognize that your free time is extremely valuable, but with a few hours per year from each member we could make huge improvements to the trail.

Auditor. The IPP board of directors is seeking a volunteer to conduct an audit of our finances. If you have non-profit experience and would like to support the IPP, please contact Paul Aeschleman at (708) 848-6023.

If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact Linda Plumb at (630) 279-8690.

Once again, thank you for your past support of the IPP, and please take a few moments to register as an active volunteer.

Very truly yours,

Paul Aeschleman, President
The Illinois Prairie Path

WEST CHICAGO PRAIRIE EVENTS

Saturday, October 5

Seed Collection.

Collection of savanna grasses and forbs. Good opportunity to visit a well-restored savanna. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Saturday, October 19

Field Trip. "What Flower Was This?" We will be looking at seed heads instead of flowers (just as striking and interesting) and enjoying the fall colors of the prairie. 9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Saturday, October 19

Seed Collection. General seed collection, mostly tall grasses.

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 2

Sunday, November 17

Saturday, December 7

Restoration Work Days.

Clearing invading brush and/or raking in seed.

9:00 a.m. - Noon.

Saturday, December 14

Birding Trip. Winter residents. Annual DuPage County winter count. Meet at the MacQueen Avenue entrance.

8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

All events except the winter bird count start from the West Chicago Prairie parking lot, located on the east side of Industrial Drive between Western and Downs. Information: Mel Hoff (630) 393-4715 or JoAnn Monge (630) 961-2041, day or evening.

— Jean C. Mooring, Editor —

MEMBERSHIP RATES:

Individual \$10

Organization/Supporting \$20

Sustaining \$50

Lifetime \$500

Family \$15

Contributing \$25

Patron \$100

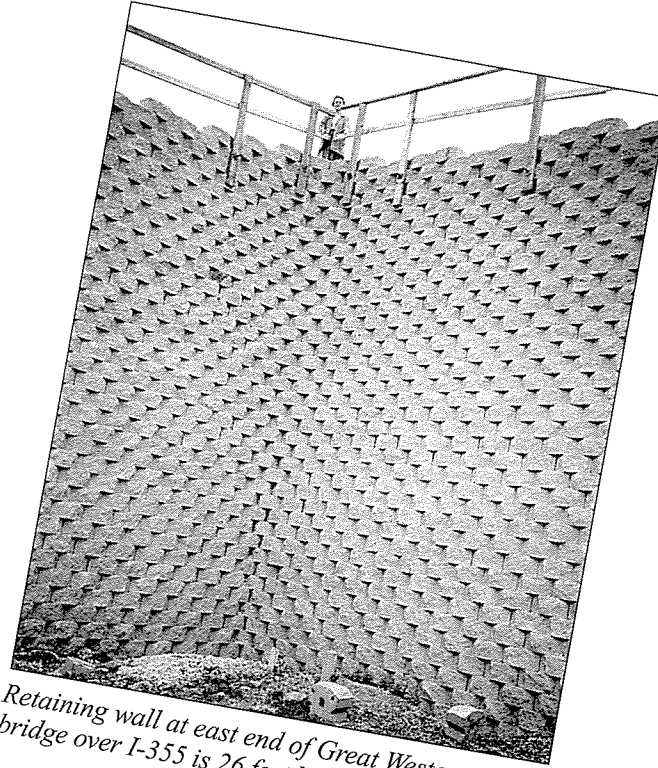
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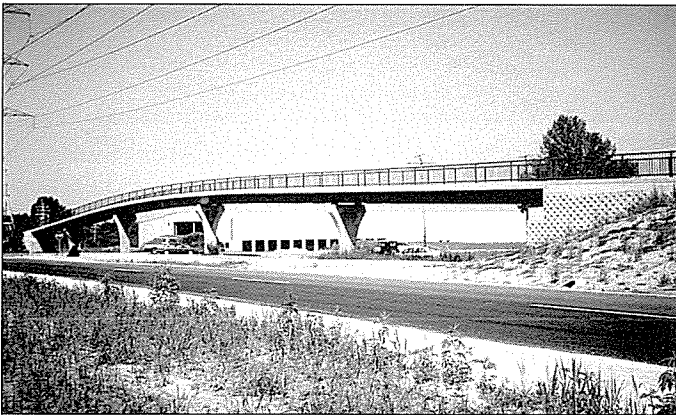
DuPage Regional Trail



IPP Aurora Branch cyclists ride over Eola Road traffic on new bridge.



Retaining wall at east end of Great Western Trail bridge over I-355 is 26 feet high.

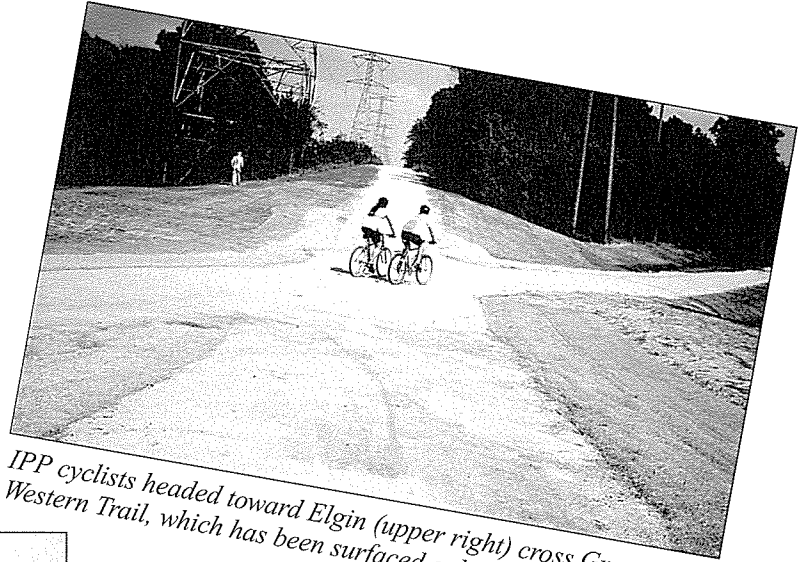


Handsome new bridge arches over Eola Road. Road in foreground leads to ComEd peaking station.

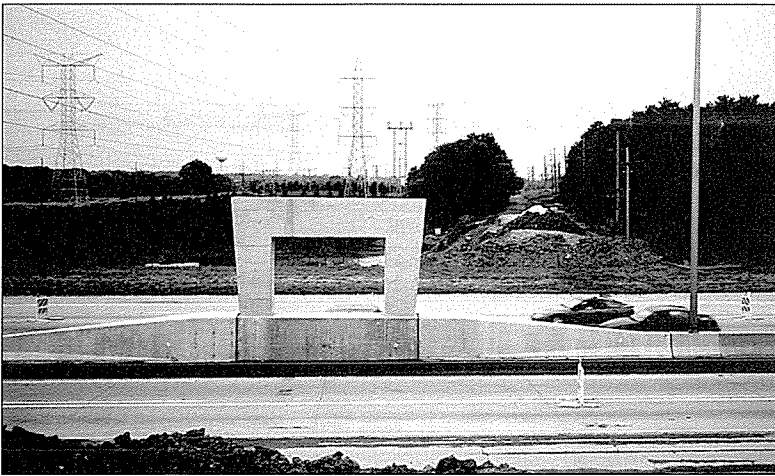


New bridge carries IPP Geneva Spur over West Branch of DuPage River in Winfield Mounds Forest Preserve.

County Projects, 1996



IPP cyclists headed toward Elgin (upper right) cross Great Western Trail, which has been surfaced only to top of hill (center).



Center pier for Great Western Trail bridge over I-355 was built in spring of 1996.



New Batavia Spur underpass at Eola Road is blacktopped.

FALL ACTIVITIES, rain or shine

(Call ahead as plans may change.)

Saturday, September 21

Great Western Prairie Work Day and Festival.

Begins at 9:00 a.m. at Berkley Ave. and IPP, Elmhurst. Leader: Keith Olson, (630) 834-7357.

Sunday, October 13

Bike Ride from County Farm Road to East Dundee via Illinois Prairie Path and Fox River Trail; approx. 40-mile round trip. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at County Farm Road and IPP. Leader: Paul Aeschleman, (708) 848-6023.

Saturdays, October 19/November 16

Regular Work Days at Great Western Prairie, Elmhurst. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Berkley Ave. and IPP. Leader: Keith Olson (630) 834-7357.

Saturday, October 19

Illinois Environmental Council Annual Conference, looking forward to the November election. Senatorial candidates Durbin and Salvi are invited. 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., University of Illinois, Springfield. Information: Ellen Schmidt, Ex. Ass't. (217) 544-5954.

Saturday, October 19

Great Western Trail Cleanup (DuPage County Section), sponsored by The Conservation Foundation of DuPage County Trails Project. Coordinator: Sue Ferguson, (630) 653-6696.

Sunday, November 3

IPP Annual Meeting. Come and meet Mike Ulm and Kandee Haertel, who will describe and illustrate with slides their exciting Grand Illinois Trail Adventure. 2:00 p.m., The Abbey, 407 West St. Charles Road, Elmhurst. Good food and good company to climax a triumphant year.

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

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