

# THE ILLINOIS PRAIRIE PATH NEWSLETTER

Fall, 1996



Canada  
goldenrod

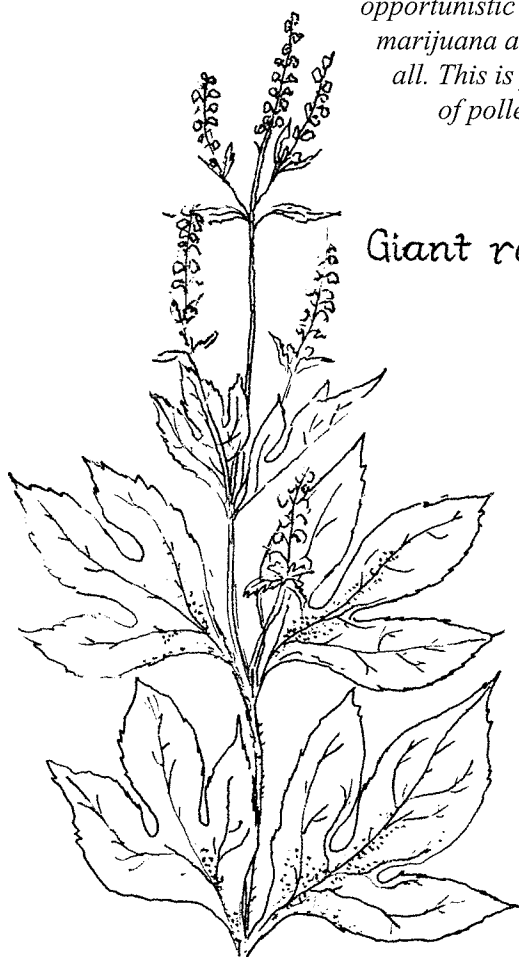
## ***Plants To Watch Out For: Giant and Common Ragweed***

*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

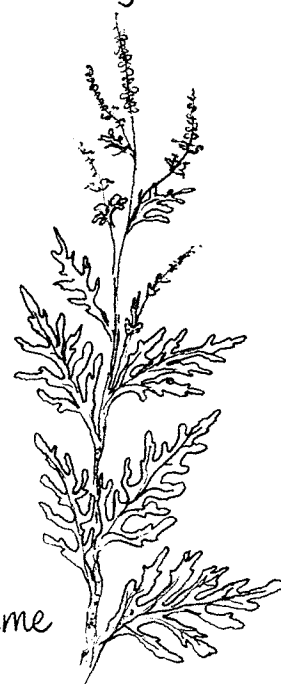


Cannabis  
(marijuana, hemp)



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.

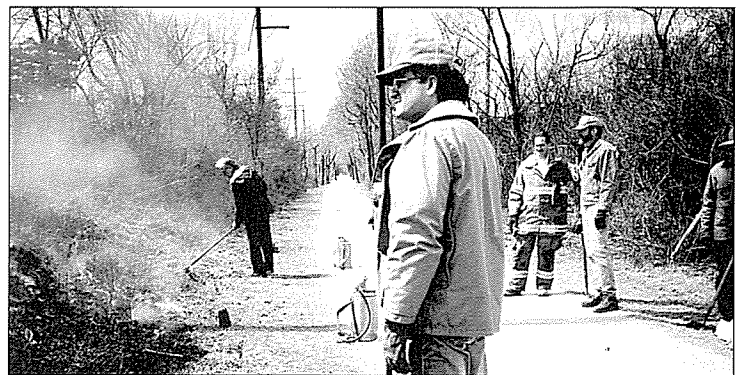
*February 17.* Elmhurst Great Western Prairie restoration, mainly brush clearing, led by Keith Olson.

*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.*