

ILLINOIS WILDLIFE PRESERVATION FUND  
GRANT # 05-009W

FINAL REPORT


Many urban and suburban homeowners are interested in making their yards more attractive to birds, butterflies and other wildlife as they also seek to get away from the use of lawn chemicals. The enclosed brochure, "From Lawn to Natural Landscape: A Homeowner's Primer," was developed to allow homeowners to evaluate their habitat as to possible restoration goals. Guidelines are provided for habitat restoration plans, along with sources of help with restoration work.

The text was developed and sent to two I.D.N.R. ecologists for review, and photographs were selected to show how natural plantings can be attractive to both people and wildlife. Layout and photos were provided by the grantee.

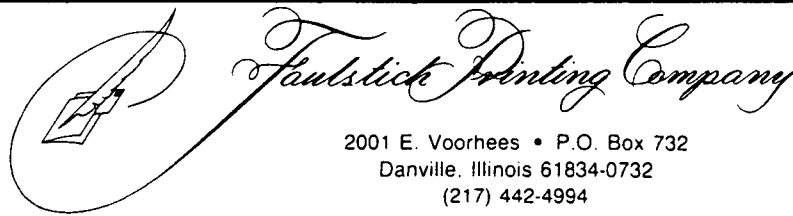
Copies of the brochure have already been distributed in a state-wide mailing, and copies are being made available to I.D.N.R. biologists for use in assisting landowners seeking information on wildlife landscaping. Brochures are also being distributed to garden clubs, Master Gardener programs, park districts and other interested parties upon request.

Announcements concerning the availability of the brochure have been provided to organizations and news media. (See attached news release.)

The estimated budget for this project was \$1250; actual cost for developing the brochure and printing 8000 copies was \$1388. (See enclosed invoice)



Marilyn F. Campbell  
Illinois Audubon Society



INVOICE NUMBER 050313

INVOICE DATE 1/27/05

SOLD TO:

Illinois Audubon Society  
 P.O. Box 2418  
 Danville, IL 61834

SHIPPED TO:

Illinois Audubon Society  
 425B N. Gilbert  
 Danville, IL 61832

TERMS	CUSTOMER ORDER NO.	CUSTOMER NO.	SALESPERSON	SHIPPED VIA	SHIPPED FROM
NET 30 DAYS		09320	01		
QUANTITY	PRODUCT CODE	DESCRIPTION		AMOUNT	

8000 "From Lawn to Natural Landscape" Brochures 1168.00

**PAID**  
 FEB 01 2005

ESTIMATED COST OF MATERIALS USED IN THE MANUFACTURE OF THESE GOODS 50% OF THIS INVOICE	TOTAL AMOUNT 1168.00
A MONTHLY SERVICE CHARGE ON ALL INDEBTEDNESS OUTSTANDING AFTER THE DUE DATE SHALL BE PAYABLE AT THE RATE OF PER MONTH ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATES ARE	All accounts due and payable 30 days following invoice date
<b>Thank You</b>	

PLEASE RETURN PINK COPY WITH REMITTANCE TO P.O. BOX 732, DANVILLE, IL 61834-0732

I.A.S. costs  
 4 hrs. @ \$50 = \$200  
 time - preparation  
 of text, layout  
 photos \$20 = 20  
 \$220

\$1168.00  
 220  
 \$1388.00

ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

Danville, IL February 1, 2005

Tired of mowing grass and treating your lawn with chemicals? Join others who are turning to natural landscaping and enjoy more leisure time! A new brochure is available to help you change your yard to one that is easy to care for and attractive to birds and other wildlife. "From Lawn to Natural Landscape: A Homeowner's Primer" is now available from the Illinois Audubon Society, P.O. Box 2418, Danville, IL 61834. (Phone 217-446-5085) The brochure outlines how to create a plan for your yard that will include both "people use" areas and natural plantings, and was created with the help of a grant from the Wildlife Preservation Fund of the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources..

An emphasis on native plants will help ensure that your new habitat will survive more easily, since there will be less need for extra watering or use of chemicals. Native plants are attuned to dry summer periods and cold winters which are common in Illinois. Prairie forbs which have become popular as backyard plants include coneflowers, blazing-stars, penstemon, asters, etc. Native berry-producing viburnums can attract birds and other wildlife, along with hazelnut, elderberry, and dogwoods.

Help in planning your yard is available from a number of state and federal agencies in your county. For testing soil fertility, contact the Soil and Water Conservation Service. If your property contains several acres and you want to consider a wetland project, contact the U.S.D.A. office and talk with the Natural Resource Conservation Service biologist. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has biologists in each region of the state who can help you with information on native plants and their sources.

A number of nurseries offer native prairie plants, wildflowers, ferns, trees and shrubs. Your local nurseryman should be willing to work with you in obtaining what you need. Write or call for your free brochure today, and begin converting your yard to natural plantings. You'll have a colorful area attractive to wildlife, and also more time to enjoy it!



### THE FINAL RESULT

After several years, when your natural landscaping has begun to mature, you will have little, or perhaps no lawn to maintain. Your property will be much more diverse, colorful and alive. Your neighbors may take a second look as they become tired of weekly lawn mowing, and may even begin to consider following your lead—which will only be more productive for neighborhood wildlife!



### THE ILLINOIS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Established 1897

P.O. Box 2418 • Danville, IL 61834-2418

[www.illinoisaudubon.org](http://www.illinoisaudubon.org)

*This brochure was funded in part by a grant from the Wildlife Preservation Fund of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Text and photos by Marilyn F. Campbell, Summer, 2004.*

## *From Lawn to Natural Landscape:*

### A HOMEOWNER'S PRIMER



The drone of a motor destroys the quiet of a weekend morning...smoke and fumes from the gasoline engine waft through the air...as one neighbor finishes mowing, another starts a few doors away.

*These are the sights and sounds which await landowners who choose manicured lawns over natural landscaping. Are there alternatives?*

rie seem more like a garden than will thick bunches of big bluestem.

You may want to consider using little bluestem, which is shorter and blends in more readily with the majority of forbs. Be sure to choose several plants which will bloom at the same time, successionaly through the summer, just as with a traditional perennial flower garden.

You might also want to consider a native shrub thicket, using species such as hazelnut, viburnums, elderberry and dogwood. Shrub thickets require much less maintenance than prairie, and also attract birds (such as gray catbird, indigo bunting and eastern towhee) that are less likely to utilize a small prairie.

### **WHAT ABOUT WET AREAS?**

If your property has a rolling terrain, with significant differences in elevation, then you may have some areas that accumulate water for a period of time. This opens the opportunity to create a wet prairie, an ephemeral wetland, or even a small pond. Wet prairies contain different plants than dry or mesic ones, although there is some overlap in species. You will need to do some research into the kinds of plants which grow best in these areas and where they may be obtained. Wetlands are very important habitats for amphibians and a wide variety of birds. Fish, except for mosquito fish, should not be introduced to the wetlands because they will prey on amphibians. (Large properties can support significant wet-

lands which will attract a whole array of aquatic wildlife.)

### **GETTING MORE INFORMATION**

Technicians with the Soil and Water Conservation Service in your county can help you with determining soil fertility and any necessary additives your yard may require. Check with your U.S.D.A. office and talk with the Natural Resource Conservation Service biologist if you are considering a wetland project. The Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources has ecologists in each region of the state who may give you information on native plants and their sources. There are a number of nurseries which offer prairie plants, wildflowers, ferns and native shrubs and trees. Your local nurseryman should be willing to work with you and can probably obtain what you need. Information on native plants can also be obtained from the Illinois Native Plant Society or the Illinois Audubon Society.

For additional information on restoring and maintaining wildlife habitat of all kinds, secure a copy of *Creating Habitats and Homes for Illinois Wildlife*, recently published through the University of Illinois. Its 200 pages are brimming with useful information and ideas for natural landscaping. The book is available from the I.D.N.R. Gift Shop in Springfield (217-782-1687) or online at <http://dnr.state.il.us> (choose the Illinois Conservation Foundation link.) You can also link to several information sources from the I.A.S. website (see back page.)

## **THE TROUBLE WITH GRASS**

In our urbanized society, a large expanse of grass may be viewed as "beautiful," but this perceived beauty comes at a high cost. A traditional lawn requires lots of maintenance, especially if the landowner keeps it free of any intruding "weeds," such as dandelions or creeping charlie. Herbicides and fertilizers usually are utilized, and the lawn mowed on a regular basis. In addition, some homeowners misuse chemicals and actually create toxic hazards for pets and young children. In dry periods, watering is necessary. Ecologically, though, a "perfect" lawn is a virtual wasteland for wildlife, bland and monotonous—the very antithesis of bountiful nature.

## **THINKING NATURALLY**

Many urban and suburban homeowners are interested in making their yards more attractive to birds, butterflies and other wildlife. Others seek to get away from the use of lawn chemicals and the grind of a regular mowing regimen. Both can be accomplished by putting together a landscape plan which will utilize native plants and minimize the planting of traditional lawn grasses. In addition, once new plantings are well-established, they require less water than lawns because many plants native to Illinois' open habitats are more resistant to drought.

## **WHERE TO BEGIN**

Evaluating your current yard and its surroundings, as well as how you want to enjoy it, is the first step in planning a

more natural landscape. If your lot is in a wooded subdivision, for example, your plan of action will be very different than if it is in an open, treeless area. You will also need to consider how you want to use your yard. Do children need a play area? Do you want a patio and barbecue pit? Or do you want to step directly from your doorway or deck to follow a path through wildlife habitat, surrounded by butterflies, birds and other creatures? Any area not being used for a specific activity should be considered for conversion to a naturalized landscape.

## **WHAT ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD?**

Another consideration is the overall neighborhood where you live, and the potential for creating more wildlife habitat beyond your own backyard. Some areas have homeowner associations which may set standards for the maintenance of property. Educational effort on your part may be required to persuade others that natural landscaping is more desirable than manicured lawns, but several studies have shown that homes in such surroundings greatly increase property values in the entire area.

Forming a neighborhood group that is interested in watching and attracting wildlife can help offset initial opposition to your natural landscaping plans, especially if you point out the economic benefits in improving habitat for your animal neighbors. Be armed with facts to address any concerns about snakes or rodents, or other wildlife issues which may surface. Placing a neat fence around your

naturalized plantings, especially in a front yard, will help define the area within as being given special care--not neglect. You may even consider enrolling your property in the Illinois Audubon Society's "Backyard Habitat Program," and display the program sign in a prominent location.

## **CREATING A PLAN**

If your home is in a wooded area, then a change to native woodland wildflowers, ferns and shade-loving shrubs will be most easily accomplished. Many nurseries handle native perennials and ferns, but you should be sure that they are from cultivated stock rather than plants which have been taken from the wild. Finding native shrubs may take more time, as most nurseries and garden centers tend to offer few of them, favoring large-flowering non-native varieties that are often more showy.

If your home is in a new residential area that is nearly treeless; and is surrounded by cropland or open space, then there are more options for natural landscaping. Before deciding on a course of action, it would be wise to have a soil evaluation to determine what kinds of plants will grow best, or what should be added to your soil to increase its fertility.

In general, sandy and clay-based soils support a variety of dry to mesic prairie plants which were once wide-spread over Illinois. But they also will support some woody vegetation. Therefore, you may opt to make your landscape a prairie,

choosing from a wide selection of grasses and forbs, or you can add some native trees and shrubs which will eventually grow to create an open savanna and shrubland, with prairie plants growing in the mottled shade of mature oaks and hickories. Obviously, it takes much longer to create a savanna, but you will be surprised at how quickly prairie plants and shrubs will mature and bloom in their new environment with some initial concentrated effort. Expect to spend quite a bit of time in establishing your native landscape. The rewards will come later, when you have very little maintenance and can enjoy an endless panorama of blossoms, butterflies and birds!

## **CHOOSING THE RIGHT PLANTS**

Historic writers often described the prairie as a "sea of grass," but it was home to a wide diversity of colorful flowering plants which are usually called "forbs." These bloomed in succession from early spring through autumn. To create a balanced prairie landscape, you should introduce a large variety of forbs and a smaller percentage of grasses. Tall grasses, such as big bluestem, Indian grass and switch grass can be used in larger plantings.

In a smaller urban backyard, you may want to use fewer tall grasses and more colorful native forbs, especially if you are concerned with the acceptance of your "new" yard by neighbors. Spikes of colorful blazingstars, penstemon, coneflowers and royal catchfly will make your prairie