

The prairie community

Ask most people to define a prairie, and you can expect a few answers. Some think of a prairie as Iowa's historic landscape. Others will say it is a bunch of grasses, or a place in which Indians and buffalo once lived. Few however, will readily define a prairie as a natural community.

In fact, prairies are among Iowa's most diverse ecosystems, containing hundreds of grass and flower species, and an incredible diversity of insect and bird life. It is in association with this natural community that human communities evolved in Iowa. Over time, the presence of prairie plants and animals built up the rich prairie soil that is today's most important agricultural resource.



The Prairies to Schools/Prairies to Businesses Program is an effort to reacquaint Iowans with the prairie community that is their natural heritage. School and business prairie plantings provide students, teachers, school faculty, workers, and customers with the ability to experience prairie plants and some wildlife on a regular basis.

Excellence in learning



Recent research shows that students have better attitudes and learn better across their entire curriculum, when teachers use the environment as an integrating context (State Education and Environment Roundtable, 1998). The availability of a sample prairie community on site is an excellent resource

for learning activities relevant to science, social studies, art, music, language arts, reading, and math. Teachers participating in the program receive a curriculum guide with many ideas on how to use the prairie as a teaching tool.

Simplicity in landscaping

Once established, the prairie community provides a beautiful landscape of grasses and flowers. A variety of flowers bloom from spring through fall, and the grasses change from summer green to autumn bronze. Fertilizers and pesticides are not needed, and after the first couple years, all mowing can be eliminated. Think of the savings in both materials and labor, and the benefits of natural beauty.



How the program works

Any school or business in Buchanan County may participate in the Prairie to Schools/Prairies to Businesses Program. For schools and businesses that qualify, the Buchanan County Conservation Board and Pheasants Forever provide the following, at no cost:

- Planning the planting, choosing the best mix of native grasses and flowers;
- Providing all the seed;
- Planting the prairie;
- Monitoring the prairie for the first two years;
- Schools receive a Prairies Teachers' Guide.

The school/business provides:

- An area of land of any size that will be designated for the prairie planting;
- A commitment to dedicate this area as prairie for the future.

Follow these three simple steps to become involved in the Prairies to Schools/Prairies to Businesses Program:

1. Choose the prairie's size and location.
2. Get support! To qualify, schools must have support from a teacher, the principal, and person responsible for schoolyard maintenance. Businesses must have support from at least one employee, the supervisor/owner, and person responsible for outdoor landscaping.
3. Contact the Conservation Department (319-636- 2617/ bccbdan@iowatelecom.net) to schedule a time to plan and plant your prairie.
4. Enjoy and share your new prairie!



A program to benefit schools!

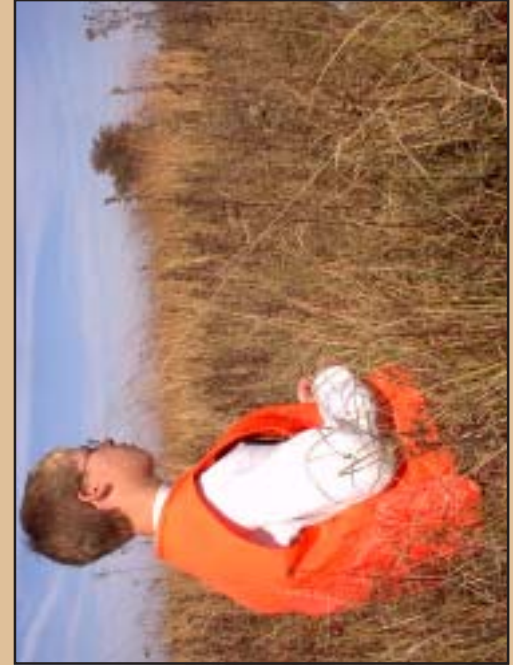
- *Provides an outdoor learning area on site, without the usual associated costs.*
- *Prepares students for field trips to larger outdoor areas.*
- *Facilitates excellence in learning for core subjects such as science, social studies, literature, math, music, and art.*
- *Includes a free prairie activities curriculum for grades K-12.*
- *Beautifies the schoolyard.*
- *Greatly reduces lawn maintenance time and costs.*
- *Provides an almost daily association with a native Iowa ecosystem.*



A program to benefit businesses!

- *Provides a scenic natural area, enjoyed by both staff and customers.*
- *Provides unique landscaping without the usual landscape costs.*
- *Promotes habitat and conservation education to the community.*
- *Provides a unique work environment.*
- *Greatly reduces lawn maintenance time and costs.*
- *Provides a visible community attraction that becomes associated with a business*
- *May include tax-savings incentives.*

Prairies to Schools/Prairies to Businesses
Buchanan County Conservation Board
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Prairies to Schools

Prairies to Businesses

A cooperative effort of the
Buchanan County Conservation Board
and Buchanan County Chapter of
Pheasants Forever.
