



the *Bluestem* *Banner*

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Tallgrass Ontario

Volume 5, No. 3

To achieve the identification, conservation, management and restoration of tallgrass prairie, savanna and related ecological communities in Ontario

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Reviving the spirit of tallgrass – in your own backyard.

Paul O'Hara gives you a primer on page 5

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Grasses – The Silent Majority: The Sequel.

Allen Woodliffe is back with the next instalment on page 3

Ojibway Nature Centre – one of the finest examples of a tallgrass prairie is near the core of Windsor. Turn to page 11

Nature Conservancy of Canada – a champion for tallgrass and savanna. Read about the Rice Lake Plains, and efforts to reintroduce Virginia Goat's Rue to Turkey Point on page 2

UTRCA Prairie garden - five years later. Turn to page 8

Natural garden companions: Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) Photo by Paul O'Hara.



The Nature Conservancy of Canada will work to restore Goat's Rue to their James Property

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is partnering with Pterophylla Native Plants and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in an effort to reintroduce *Tephrosia virginiana*, commonly known as Virginia Goat's Rue to their James Property at Turkey Point. Seed collection activities for this endangered savanna species will be authorized by the MNR, from reproducing populations in St. Williams Crown Reserve. Seeds will be propagated by Pterophylla Native Plants, and plugs planted in spring of 2005. Management efforts with the help of volunteers on the James Property have already helped to enhance savanna habitat for an existing population of Bird's-foot Violet among other species, so we have high hopes for the success of this restoration initiative.



Endangered Virginia Goat's Rue, R. Gould



Photo: Rick Beaver, Alderville First Nation

Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative Update

by Todd Farrell and Andrew Taylor

On June 24th, 2004, close to 100 people gathered at the Alderville First Nation's Community Centre to celebrate the spirit of conservation partnerships as exemplified by the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative.

In honour of Canada's birthday, the Nature Conservancy of Canada's Ontario Region celebrated the conservation partnership that is working to protect one of the rarest habitats in the province, the black oak savanna of the Rice Lake Plains, as part of NCC's third annual **Gifts to Canadians** initiative. Guests enjoyed tours of NCC's Burnley Carmel property, led by NCC Eastern Ontario Stewardship Officer Todd Farrell, and Alderville First Nation's Black Oak Savanna and Prairie led by Natural Heritage Coordinator Amanda Newell.

Summer Inventories and Management Planning

This summer as part of the Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has been evaluating Tallgrass Prairies and Black Oak Savannas on privately owned land of the Rice Lake Plains. The Rice Lake Plains is located on the farthest eastern extent of the Oak Ridges Moraine, south of Rice Lake. *Continued on page 12.*

Grasses: the quiet majority - Part II *by Allen Woodliffe*

In Volume 5, No. 1, there was a brief introduction to the five primary grasses that occur in the tallgrass prairie community. These are big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, prairie cord grass and switchgrass, and can make up to 70% of the total vegetative biomass in a healthy prairie. Knowing what kinds of grasses are present is key to understanding the basics of tallgrass prairie. However in appreciating the nuances of prairie ecology it is even more useful to understand how the grasses influence this incredible vegetation community and in turn, are influenced by the very processes they perpetuate. The following is an attempt to very briefly explain some of the ecological aspects of grasslands.

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) photo by Allen Woodliffe

Life as a prairie grass is not easy. Summer temperatures at the soil surface can reach 60°C or more. The hot dry winds of summer, especially in an open sandy location where the abrasive action of blowing sand adds to the stress of survival, can quickly parch any unprepared living thing. Add to that the equally desiccating bitter winter winds, the scorching fires of spring and the constant feeding on by herbivores and well, it is a downright tough existence, with no where to go. Yet in spite of those challenges, prairie grasses are incredibly well designed to not only withstand but actually thrive under these conditions better than many other organisms.

The flexible yet rigid stems are creatively designed with a high concentration of oxide of silicon, which provides support even throughout the winter. This rigidity aids in trapping snow, which will in turn melt and recharge the ground water to assist in providing moisture during the growing season.



Most prairie grasses are long-lived perennials, reproducing vegetatively. In fact there are many prairie researchers who claim they have never seen a big bluestem seedling in the natural prairie! Certainly grasses can produce a fair bit of seed, but very little has an opportunity to germinate. Historically, grazers such as bison, elk and deer would consume much of the fresh growth that might otherwise develop to produce seed.

Grazers actually help perpetuate grasses because nipping off the fresh new growth stimulates other shoots at or below ground level to begin growing. The wide ranging herds of bison and the smaller numbers of elk and deer seldom grazed so intensively to negate this process. However for tallgrass prairies facing the intensive grazing pressure of pastured cattle it is a different story: there the prairie grasses decrease to the advantage of cool season grasses. *Continued on page 4.*

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) Photo by Cathy Quinlan



(Continued from page 3) The grazing of forbs, or wildflowers, diminishes those species survival, as the growing point for most of them is at the tallest point of the plant. As an analogy, that is why it is good to mow your lawn but not your flower garden!

Of the seed that is produced, much of it would be consumed by abundant seed-eaters, such as northern bobwhite, bobolink, and sparrows and longspurs of several species, which can be especially numerous in winter. Other seed eaters include mice, voles and even insects. Most of the remaining seed might be consumed by fire before it had a chance to germinate. Any seed that escaped consumption to this point would then have to have contact with the soil and have adequate moisture, warmth and light to germinate. Given the density of the prairie sod the likelihood of successful germination is quite miniscule.

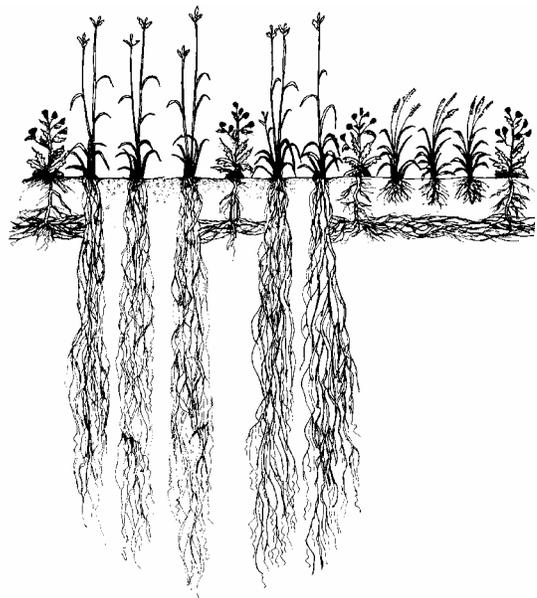
Most prairie grasses reproduce vegetatively by means of rhizomes and tillers. The rhizomes are shoots that grow horizontally just a few centimetres underground.



Big Bluestem Photo by Allen Woodliffe.

Early settlers found the traditional wood and iron tillage implements that worked satisfactorily in lighter, forest-cleared soils to the east to be no match for the prairie sod. This necessitated the development of the polished steel moldboard plow in 1837 by an Illinois blacksmith named John Deere. This new technology quickly changed the prairie landscape from a tremendous diversity of grasses, legumes and composites to the very few grasses (e.g. corn and wheat) and legumes (e.g. soybeans) of today.

Not only does the presence of a dense sod prevent the seed of many other species from coming in contact with the soil and becoming established, their roots also extend a long way down. Most warm season grasses will penetrate at least 1.5 metres, while some such as prairie cord grass, panic grass and big bluestem typically reach depths of 2.5 to almost 4 metres. *Continued on page 9.*



Urban Prairie Gardening: reviving the spirit of tallgrass in Southern Ontario *by Paul O'Hara*

Humans have gravitated to grasslands the world over for settlement, and Southern Ontario is no different. Windsor, Chatham, London, Brantford, Toronto, and Peterborough were all built, at least in part, on prairie and savanna plant communities (Bakowsky 1994).

Where I live in Hamilton, these plant communities could be found 200 years ago in the downtown core and out towards the Westdale area near McMaster University. They wound around the Dundas Valley following the Norfolk Sand Plain through Ancaster and Flamborough townships, and stretched in a mosaic of prairie, savanna, and oak woodland along the lake plain towards Toronto. Early land survey records indicate an estimated 6000 hectares of tallgrass prairie and savanna existed in Hamilton Region at the time of settlement (Goodban et al. 1996). Today, barely one hectare remains. The spirit of these plant communities lies dormant in parks, schoolyards, roadsides, industrial complexes and backyards, waiting to be revived.



*Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea) and Dense Blazing-star (Liatris spicata):
a classic prairie garden combination. Photo by Paul O'Hara*

In the Garden

Prairie and savanna plants are well suited to urban and suburban environments. They match the light conditions of the average urban neighbourhood, from the full sun of open prairie to the dappled shade of oak woodland (deeply shaded forest conditions are rather scarce within the urban envelope). There are prairie plants suited to almost any soil condition: wet to dry, clay to sand, and varied levels of acidity and fertility. Prairie gardens require no pesticides or fertilizers and no supplemental watering once established.

Property owners can therefore avoid adding excess pressures to already ecologically stressed environments. Furthermore, prairie plants are beautiful and feed the many kinds of wildlife that depend on them for pollen, nectar, berries, seeds, nuts, nesting and shelter. In this respect, these plants are a constant source of passive learning and entertainment for kids of all ages.

Armed with a few native plant nursery catalogues it is easy to pick out a dozen plants for any garden area. While it is important to adhere to basic principles of landscape design (i.e. function, balance, rhythm and repetition) you can get away with a lot by first building a sensible garden structure. In other words, deciding first where to put the prairie or meadow (perennial borders), the bird thicket (screening and foundation plantings), and the woodland (for garden areas around any large shade trees).

For the perennial border, pick three or four flowering plants for each season - spring, summer and fall. Plant singly and in drifts, using finer-leaved grasses and sedges for contrast in garden textures. Asters (*Aster* or *Symphotrichum* spp.) and Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) are a must for any perennial border because of their high value to wildlife. For foundation plantings and screening along fences, plant a diverse bird thicket leaving a few pockets for further perennial plantings. Pick shrubs and small trees of varying heights, forms and foliage that provide wildlife with flowers and fruits for different parts of the growing season. Try our native dogwoods (*Cornus* spp.), viburnums (*Viburnum* spp.), hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.), and roses (*Rosa* spp.). And under the shade tree, choose forbs and grasses of the savanna or woodland edge. (*Please turn to page 6*)

Maintaining the Prairie Garden *(continued from page 5)*

Well now that the prairie garden is planted and watered, it's time to sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labour. The truth is little maintenance is needed for prairie gardens; a little gentle prodding is all that is necessary. When weeds appear, get out the secateurs and snip them out. The aggressive pulling of weeds (and the inevitable chunk of soil that comes with it) usually creates more weed problems. As the plants mature they will seed into other areas leaving less room for weedy invaders.

Returning the prairie to Ancaster: an informal garden at the office of Resurrection Cemetery. Photo by Paul O'Hara

Let the leaves fall where they may! Most prairie and meadow plants are built to push through some leaf cover to emerge again the following spring. However, leaves that pile up in windy corners of the garden should be spread to other areas.

Leave dried stems and seed heads of prairie forbs and grasses to stand through the winter. They are used by over-wintering insects and birds for food and cover. Or better yet, collect the seeds and broadcast them into developing garden areas or share them with your neighbour. In early spring, take a pair of hedge shears, and beginning at the top, chop the stems down into small pieces (less than 10cm in length). Leave the pieces in the garden to encourage soil development and nutrient recycling.



*Left: Sweet Ox-eye (*Heliopsis helianthoides*) and Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) among other prairie natives in a formal garden setting. The shrub in the back is Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*). Photo by Paul O'Hara*

And finally, for the successful prairie garden, one must listen to the land. I say 'listen' because there is no greater teacher than Mother Nature herself. This point cannot be overstated for landscape professionals wishing to naturalize urban areas. To design with the spirit of the prairie, meadow, thicket, and woodland in mind, one must first visit the prairie, meadow, thicket, and woodland. This does not mean breaking out the books and engaging in serious nature study, it means getting out there and just bearing witness to the land.

In this way, we may build healthier, more fulfilling communities, and revive the spirit of prairie and savanna in the urban fabric of Southern Ontario.

And for more of Paul's "prairie picks" turn to page 7.

References: Bakowsky, W.D. 1994. Oak Ontario. *Wildflower* 10(4): 28-31.

Goodban, A.G., W.D. Bakowsky, and B.D. Bricker, 1996. The historical and present extent and floristic composition of prairie and savanna vegetation in the vicinity of Hamilton, Ontario. In: Warwick, C. editor. *Fifteenth North American Prairie Conference Proceedings*.

Urban Prairie Gardening: a gardener's list *text & photos by Paul O'Hara*

Many of us are familiar with flowering prairie plants like Black-eyed Susan, Wild Bergamot, Purple Coneflower, Sweet Ox-eye and Dense Blazing-star. They make beautiful additions to any garden. However, as any gardener knows, the possibilities for plant selections and combinations are endless. Below I've listed a few fine plants and some gardening tips that should be helpful.

Hoary Vervain (*Verbena stricta*)

Extremely drought-tolerant with long-lasting violet-purple blooms in summer. Combine with the yellows of Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) or Sweet Ox-eye (*Heliopsis helianthoides*) for nice effect. *Photo at right*



Switch Grass (*Panicum virgatum*)

One of the bread and butter grasses of the Southern Ontario prairie. Its wiry, colourful seed heads look cool next to plants of bolder foliage

Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*)

If there is one native plant destined to become the new millenium lawn of Southern Ontario, this is it. And Penn Sedge has dozens of forbs in its diminutive, woodland posse to add colour and interest throughout the growing season. Tolerates sun to dry shade.

Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)

Spring colour for the savanna garden. Surprisingly drought-tolerant, Wild Geranium looks beautiful planted in drifts with Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) and woodland grasses/sedges

Smooth Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)

The white-flowered Smooth Beardtongue and blue-flowered Hairy Beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*) are both great garden plants for late spring colour. Smooth Beardtongue is taller (~100cm) and has more striking foliage. *Photo at right*



Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*)

Just one of the members of Penn Sedge's low-growing posse. I'm always amazed to see how such large, blue blooms emerge from its tiny, delicate foliage. Great along garden borders with Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*).

New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*)

A beautiful stand-up aster that tolerates almost any soil conditions, clay to sand, dry to moist, and feeds a variety of insects including the Monarch Butterfly

*Urban Prairie Gardening: a gardener's list (continued from page 7)***Woodland Sunflower***(Helianthus divaricatus)*

This kid has a bit of an attitude problem. But for those with a limited budget and a big space to fill, this plant is for you!

*Photo at right***Carolina Rose***(Rosa Carolina)*

Put away the chemicals for this rose. Mix with other shrubs like American Hazel (*Corylus americana*), Gray Dogwood (*Cornus foemina ssp. racemosa*), and Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*) for nice, bird-thickety effect

**Red Cedar** (*Juniperus virginiana*)

Native conifers are in short supply in Southern Ontario and our native juniper has it all: nice form, high wildlife value, and a polite manner.

Bottlebrush Grass (*Elymus hystrix*)

Good for cleaning out bottles and planting in any sunny to part sunny garden area. Best planted in masses.

Seeds readily into other areas. *Photo at right*

Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)

Well, not actually a prairie plant, but I couldn't help mentioning this fantastic landscape shrub. If Chokeberry can survive the howling winds of Tapleystown in Hamilton, it will surely survive in the most ecologically barren of landscapes - say, a parking lot.

Hill's Oak (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*)

Wishful thinking on my part. Large-caliper trees of Southern Ontario provenance are not in the nursery trade as of yet. Would gladly buy 'em if someone grew 'em.



Paul O'Hara is a botanist, native plant gardener and board member of Tallgrass Ontario. He is the owner/operator of Blue Oak Native Landscapes and can be reached at blueoak@sympatico.ca.

(Continued from page 4) Of course droughts are not uncommon in many parts of the prairie, particularly in the west, and deeper roots obviously have the advantage of obtaining valuable moisture. Several of the prairie grass species will reach 1.5 to 2.5 or more metres in height at maturity, and growing as a clump, represent a sizeable amount of biomass. Yet more than 60% of their total biomass is underground. The root systems fill in almost all available space just a few centimetres below the surface with rhizomes, rootlets and root hairs. The rhizomes in particular are often very coarse and provide an ample source of food reserves to help the plant survive during times of drought. In one study of a clump of big bluestem over a two year period there was a total of 97metres of rhizomes produced in a single square metre of soil only a few centimetres in depth!



There are no more productive soils on earth than the well-developed soils of the tallgrass prairie. Over the course of centuries there is a continual growth, decay and re-growth of the roots and rhizomes which build up the organic and nutrient component. The dense vegetation at ground level retains water and instead of the organics being washed away during snow melt or heavy rainfall, they percolate through the interstices of the soil created by the root systems. As a result it was not uncommon for the best quality tallgrass prairie soils to be more than 100 centimetres deep!

The percent grass cover in a healthy prairie also provides ideal conditions for one of the most important elements of prairie function—fire. Even though a number of prairie forbs or wildflowers also grow roots to impressive depths, they do not ordinarily grow in ever expanding clumps. Most forbs have relatively coarse stems compared to the finer fuels that grasses provide. A field of forbs, while it might burn, would cause a fairly low intensity and patchy fire, not at all conducive to providing the benefits of a hot and relatively complete fire that the grasses induce. The cooler patchy fire would recycle the nutrients less efficiently and, even more importantly, not eliminate the competitive cool season grasses, forbs and woody species.

Purple Three Awn (Aristida purpurascens) Photo by Allen Woodliffe

Also, for grasses, the main growing points, or meristems, are below the ground surface and thus are not harmed by a prairie fire. Forbs and woody plant species have their growing points above ground and are suppressed by fire, especially the cool season species. In short, without adequate fire, prairie will quickly succeed to shrubs and eventually forest, especially in the eastern part of its range where greater moisture conditions favour these species and suppress fire.

In the overall scheme of things, it is clear that the warm season prairie grasses are incredibly well designed to life on a prairie. They are well adapted to out compete the competition. And in return, their very existence supports conditions for events such as fire, that are absolutely essential for their survival.

Creating a Prairie Garden by Cathy Quinlan,
Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

This prairie garden, created in 1999, is located in front of the administration building of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority in London, Ontario. It was created as part of a larger naturalization project that saw dozens of horticultural plants removed from the grounds and replaced with locally native plants.



The juniper bushes that once grew in this 'circle garden' were pulled out in the fall of 1998 with a backhoe and a loose sandy loam soil was added. A plan was developed on paper for the garden that included a woodchip path through the middle, large boulders for aesthetics, a small stone pond for wildlife, and over 24 species of tallgrass prairie plants grown in clumps. The plants were arranged such that the smaller plants (e.g. little bluestem, prairie smoke) would be visible from the path or edge and the taller plants (e.g. tall sunflower) were positioned in the middle. Colour and flowering time were also considered in the arrangement.

In June of 1999 plugs obtained from a local native plant nursery (*Pterophylla*) were planted in the garden according to the plan. Five plugs were planted together to form a clump of one species. Plant labels were added so visitors and staff could identify the various flowers and grasses.



Some watering was carried out that first summer to help the plugs get established but the garden no longer requires watering. The garden is hoed only once a year in the late spring after the native plants can be identified from the weeds. The light soil makes this task fairly easy. Once the plants reach their full height in summer, there is very little exposed soil for weeds to take root so very little weeding is needed. The dead stalks are cut off near the base of the plants and removed in the early spring to assist with hoeing and to keep the garden from filling in.

UTRCA Admin Building Prairie Garden: July 1999 (top) and August, 2004. Photos by Cathy Quinlan

Today (2004) the garden has more than met our expectations. Robust clumps of colourful flowers (black-eyed Susan, grey-headed coneflower, prairie smoke, tall coreopsis, ironweed, dense blazing star) are interspersed with elegant grasses (little bluestem, big bluestem, prairie cordgrass and others). The colours peak in mid August.

The garden is located within the Fanshawe Conservation Area in northeast London and is open to the public. For directions, call (519) 451-2800.

Tallgrass and the Ojibway Nature Centre

The Ojibway Nature Centre is unique in its proximity to Windsor's city core. Our location offers a chance for people to experience the tallgrass prairie without having to travel a great distance. We are also connected to Windsor's bike trails so many people include Ojibway on their bike rides. Our live exhibits, touch table and ever changing displays offer an experience that all ages enjoy.

On Sundays during the fall and spring we have hour-long hikes for families. The fall is one of the most popular times to visit Ojibway. Our trees turn



vibrant colours and asters, goldenrods and gentians flower in the prairie in abundance. In one weekend during the fall we can have over 700 visitors. Ojibway is also the location for the very popular native plant sale that takes place in the spring and fall. Many of the species sold are tallgrass prairie plants which people may purchase so as to enjoy in their own garden. This fall's plant sale is on September 11.

We host two festivals in the fall and in the winter. All of our festivals include guided hikes, crafts, displays and food. They are truly a day for the entire family. Ojibway Park is also the location for Windsor's Earth Day celebration. This big day attracts over 5000 visitors who come to watch the entertainment, look at displays and get involved in hands-on activities.

Ojibway is home to an active volunteer group, the Friends of Ojibway Prairie. Our hardworking volunteers collect and clean seeds from the prairie to sell to those who are naturalizing their gardens or restoring tallgrass prairie to their property.

These dedicated volunteers head out in any weather to help maintain the park by removing invasive species and picking up litter. They also cook some delicious snacks during our festivals!

When you step inside the Nature Centre the first thing you will see is a large paper mache rattlesnake, which pops out of the wall. This display is a favourite of children and adults alike. It is one of the first things to greet children who are visiting on a field trip. Thousands of children visit the centre during the year with their teachers. Children ranging from kindergarten to high school come from as far away as Chatham and Michigan to learn through hands-on activities. One of our most popular programs is *Creepy Critters* that discusses animals people usually fear. The program concludes with a visit from our resident fox snake, Autumn, which the children are given a chance to pet.

Autumn is a well-travelled snake. He has visited over a hundred schools as part of our *Reach out to Wildlife* and *It's Endangered* programs that bring part of Ojibway's tallgrass prairie to the classroom. For one hour, children in the heart of the city are able to experience the many delights that are found in the tallgrass prairie without leaving the classroom. Responses from children and teachers alike have been overwhelmingly positive. We are very happy to offer this program free of charge thanks to the grants we have received from the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk.

Ojibway also has programs for adults such as our birding courses led by the city Naturalist and very well known birder, Paul Pratt. Evening courses on everything from fungus to warblers are held throughout the year. A new program, which has been well received by the public, is our *Prairie Days* hike. The focus of this course is the tallgrass prairie. The unique plants and animals that inhabit this endangered ecosystem often surprise people with their diversity.

Ojibway offers something of interest to all age groups. We hope that you will make time to take a trip to our prairie. We promise that you will be welcome and see more than you expected!

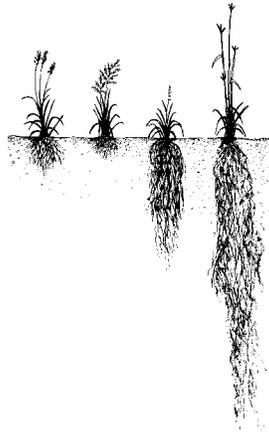
Photo and text courtesy of Ojibway Nature Centre and Paul Pratt. Check out: www.ojibway.ca

In the Wake of Visitors – Resource Management (October 8 – 10, 2004). Plant and transplant native grasses to help restore Pinery Provincial Park's Oak Savanna. Near Grand Bend.
www.ontarionature.org

Thinking Big - Sustaining Landscapes in Carolinian Canada 1984 – 2004 – 2024
Oct 1 - 2, 2004 at Port Franks
www.carolinian.org

North American Native Plant Society Annual General Meeting – October 2, 2004.
Markham. Look in
www.nanps.org/events/

This edition of the Bluestem Banner has been made possible by a donation in memory of Hala and Ivan Fedun



Seed Source Sought:
U of Waterloo student in Environment and Resource Studies is looking for a seed source to help restore two prairie patches (about one acre) in the Kitchener area. Contact: amcanel@fes.uwaterloo.ca

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Line drawings by Judie Shore

(Continued from page 2) **The Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative** is a partnership between the NCC, the County of Northumberland, Ontario Parks, Lower Trent Conservation Authority, Ganaraska Conservation Authority and Wildlife Habitat Canada / Wetland Habitat Fund; with funding from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. The purpose of this Initiative is the locate areas of Tallgrass Prairie or Black Oak Savanna, raise awareness of this unique community and document the status of the remnant.

Potential prairie or savanna sites were identified using historical records, aerial photographs and soil maps. In addition experts and previous work on the site were consulted. Landowners were contacted and site visits were arranged. While at the site, data was collected on the presence and relative abundance of prairie and savanna plant species. Ecological land classification techniques were used to classify the sites. As well, landowners were informed on the details of their tallgrass site and possible restoration techniques.

The overall response from the landowners has been very positive. They are keen to learn more about Tallgrass Prairie, the Oak Ridges Moraine and what species they can find on their property. Several of the properties have had excellent tallgrass communities. Hillsides carpeted with Big and Little Bluestem, Prairie Buttercups, Low Bindweed and Round-headed Bushclover, not to mention dozens of other prairie wildflowers. Management plans are being worked on for several other “anchor properties/public properties”. These include the Lower Trent Region's Alderville Woods property and the NCC's Burnley Carmel Property. Sites are also being evaluated in the Northumberland County Forest.

In addition to wildflowers, observations on insects and mammals have been recorded. One new discovery this year is the Ghost Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela lepida*). This beetle has a rank of G4, S2. This means there are between 5 and 20 occurrences in the province. The species prefers open undisturbed sand barren habitats. The Ghost Tiger Beetle is a mottled whitish colour which blends in perfectly with its habitat.

Check out the Rice Lake Plains at www.natureconservancy.ca under the Ontario featured project