


# Historic Roadsides

# 2025 CALENDAR



In the 1980s, Bill Haywood became the Black Hawk County weed commissioner. He wanted to change how counties managed their roadsides and encourage them to stop spraying large amounts of herbicide. Instead, he wanted to create a program that used native prairie species in the management regimen. Bill was among the early conservationists promoting integrated roadside vegetation management. Haywood approached Daryl Smith at UNI about using the university as a parent agency for the program. County conservation boards and secondary roads departments began to use the program housed at UNI.

Bill Haywood was known for being charismatic. His strong speaking and writing skills created momentum for the program. He eventually left the to start his own forestry consulting business.

Bill Haywood


Eells, J. (2016, May 5). *Interview with Kirk Henderson.*

Eells, J. (2017). *Iowa's Living Roadway Trust Fund and Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Program.* E Resources Group, LLC.

JANUARY

Photo by Kirk Henderson

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The Lincoln Highway Association implemented the idea of paved seedling miles along the Lincoln Highway to promote concrete paved roads in states that had poor road conditions. They required that these paved miles be in the rural countryside and at places where road travel was difficult due to existing landscape conditions.

The first and only official seedling mile in Iowa was built in Linn County from 1918–1919. The road was 16 feet wide and just short of a mile by 200 feet. This stretch of the Lincoln Highway was northwest of Mount Vernon before it went through Marion and into Cedar Rapids. More paving jobs were not immediately available in the area because of funding scuffles between Marion and Cedar Rapids in their fight for the Linn County seat. The Linn County Seedling Mile was one of the last seedling miles along the Lincoln Highway.

Rogers, L. D., & Kernek, C. L. (2005). *The Lincoln Highway's Seedling Mile*. *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, 86(3), 105–115. <https://doi.org/10.17077/1088-5943.1185>

## The Seedling Mile

# FEBRUARY

Used with permission from the Iowa Department of Transportation.

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# Daryl Smith

Daryl Smith became fascinated with prairies while getting his master's degree at the University of South Dakota. After receiving a doctorate degree at the University of Iowa, he started teaching at the University of Northern Iowa in 1967. In the mid-1980s, Bill Haywood asked Smith to help him put together a statewide roadside program. They wrote a grant proposal to the DNR to start the prototype in 1987 and, shortly thereafter, the UNI roadside office was put into Iowa Roadside Vegetation Management legislation.


Smith was in charge of the oversight and management of the UNI office. In 1990, Smith created the Iowa Ecotype Project to increase the availability of native seed in Iowa. Smith retired as director of the Tallgrass Prairie Center in 2013. Laura Jackson is the current director.

Eells, J. (2016, April 8). *Interview with Daryl Smith*.  
Eells, J. (2017). *Iowa's Living Roadway Trust Fund and Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Program*. E Resources Group, LLC.

# March

Photo from TPC Collection

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An aerial photograph showing a prescribed burn in progress. A large area of dry, brown vegetation is being consumed by a fire, with thick white and grey smoke rising from the burning area. The smoke drifts across the landscape. In the foreground, a dirt road runs horizontally, and a person wearing a yellow safety vest is visible near the edge of the burn. To the right, a paved road with yellow lane markings curves away. The background shows a vast, flat, open landscape under a clear sky.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has participated in prescribed burns since the early 1970s. Many of Iowa's county roadside programs regularly conduct prescribed burns.

The purpose of a burn is to control undesirable invasive vegetation; enhance habitats for prairie wildlife that are adapted to landscapes where fire regularly occurs; increase seed production of specific species; prepare a site for planting, seeding, or harvesting; and lower chances of wildfires by removing excess plant debris. Burns typically occur every three to seven years, depending on the site and objectives.

Iowa DNR. (n.d.). *Prescribed Burn*. Iowa DNR.

Roberts, S. (2022, April 1). *Spring Prairie Burns: Why they're important and when to do them*. Scott SWCD. <https://www.scottswcd.org/post/spring-prairie-burns-why-they-re-important-and-when-to-do-them>

## Roadside Burns

# APRIL

Photo by Jacob Gish



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Female red-winged blackbirds are common inhabitants of roadsides. They love wet ditches and also nest in burrow pits along major roads.

When a roadside is properly managed, wildlife that use edge or corridor habitats receive great benefits. These animals include birds like the American kestrel, small mammals like the fox squirrel, amphibians, insects, and reptiles, like snakes. Roadsides have become especially attractive for nesting birds with the decline of prairies and other grassland habitats. The ring-necked pheasant is an example of a bird that uses roadsides for rearing broods.

Davros, N. (2016, May 10). *Roadsides: Ecological Traps or Opportunities to Provide Habitat?*  
Arbuckle, K., & Pease, J. (1999, Sept.). *Managing Iowa Habitats: Restoring Odd Areas in Rural Landscapes.*

Missouri Department of Conservation. (n.d.). *Red-winged blackbird.*  
<https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/red-winged-blackbird>

## Wildlife Habitat

MAY

Photo by Becky VanWey

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# Roadside Pollinators

The decrease in prairie has created fragmented habitats for native pollinators. What remains is broken up by large stretches of farmland with less food and water sources, contributing to the decline in pollinator populations. Originally, there were around 47 species of skippers, a type of butterfly, in Iowa. As of 2022, there were 27 species.

Pollinators need a food source and a safe place to lay eggs. A food source is needed all growing season, making it crucial that habitats like roadsides have diverse species. The bloom times must be different throughout the growing season to sustain multiple groups of pollinators and create the best habitat. Diverse native plantings also provide plenty of host plants for eggs and larvae.

Stein, D. (2022, March 2). *The State of Pollinators in Iowa. Prairie Rivers of Iowa.* <https://www.prrcd.org/pollinators-are-disappearing-in-iowa/>  
Hopwood, J. (2010). *Pollinators and Roadsides: Managing Roadsides for Bees and Butterflies.* The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

# JUNE

Photo by Chris Henze

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# Roadside Warriors

Roadside management teams work tirelessly to ensure Iowa's roadsides are managed in an environmentally safe manner by following integrated roadside vegetation management practices.

They wrangle noxious weeds, clear trees and brush, prevent erosion, establish seed, and educate landowners. Roadside managers and their teams make Iowa's roadsides beautiful, safe for transportation, and friendly to native pollinators and plants. By planting deep-rooted native plants and strategically using herbicides, roadside teams also improve water quality. Thanks to Federal Highway Administration grants, Iowa's roadside managers have seeded over 25,000 acres of county roadsides with high-quality native prairie seed mixes since the 1990s.

Johnson County Iowa. (2019). *Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management*. <https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/irvm>  
Tallgrass Prairie Center. (2024). *Starting a Roadside Vegetation Management Program*. <https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/irvm/starting-program>

1995 PRAIRIE RESTORATION  
CERRO GORDO CO CONSERVATION



JULY



Photo by Ty Hamiel

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Roadside management signage has been used as early as the 1940s in Iowa. Doug Heins captured the image of an early Iowa road with the signage saying, "Seeding Please Keep Off Help Prevent Roadside Fires." Signage is critical for indicating areas that are prairies in progress and areas where spraying and mowing is not allowed.

Without proper, clear, and concise signage, an area that is not meant to be mowed or sprayed could be managed incorrectly, damaging a habitat with a specific wildlife goal. Before placing signage on roadsides, contact the Iowa Department of Transportation and the county roads department to be added to a no mow/no spray list or program if necessary.

Blank Park Zoo. (2024). *Roadsides as Habitat*. <https://www.blankparkzoo.com/conservation/plantgrowfly/roadsides-as-habitat>









Tallgrass Prairie Center. (2024). *Signs*. <https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/signs>

Signage

AUGUST

Photo by Corey Meyer



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# Iowa Ecotype Project

The Iowa Ecotype Project, now called the Plant Materials Program, was created to collect, preserve, and produce seeds for seed growers to grow and sell. Daryl Smith proposed the project to the Living Roadway Trust Fund in 1990. He felt native local ecotype seeds available to native seed growers needed to be increased in order to make native seeds for roadside plantings and create a competitive native seed market.

The program was largely run by graduate students for its first three years at the UNI roadside office before Greg Houseal took over the project. Greg Houseal initially ran the Plant Materials Program, which is now led by Laura Walter. The process involves searching remnant prairies for specific species and collecting seeds from the species to establish in plots.

TPC Collection (2021). *A Locally-Sourced Approach: How the History of Prairie Preservation, Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management, and the Iowa Ecotype Project Informs the Present.*

Eells, J. (2017). *Iowa's Living Roadway Trust Fund and Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Program.* E Resources Group, LLC.

# SEPTEMBER

Photo by Laura Walter

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28 World Rivers Day	29	30  Drawing by Kirk Henderson	<p>October 2025</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>T</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td>31</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		 The Iowa Ecotype Project Drawing by Paul Bockenstedt and Kirk Henderson		 Photos from TPC Collection
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# Kirk Henderson

Kirk Henderson managed the UNI roadside office from 1992–2012. Henderson had been laid off from construction for the winter and started going to UNI full time, working toward a degree in biology. He started working part time in a co-op position for the roadside office in the fall of 1989.

Henderson got to work with Al Ehley, the UNI roadside office manager, as a student employee. When Henderson took over Ehley's position, he worked alongside Steve Holland to build a learning community of roadside managers. Henderson was also in charge of native seed distribution. He coordinated the acquisition of native seed to distribute to counties in roadside programs across the state. Kirk Henderson also loved taking photographs of the roadsides, native plants, and management processes.

Eells, J. (2016, May 5). *Interview with Kirk Henderson*.  
Eells, J. (2017). *Iowa's Living Roadway Trust Fund and Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Program*. E Resources Group, LLC.

# OCTOBER

Photo by Kirk Henderson

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<p>September 2025</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>T</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					 <p>Photos from TPC Collection</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Yom Kippur Ends at Sundown</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	
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<p>12</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Sukkot Ends at Sundown Indigenous Peoples' Day</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>																																										
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# Roadside Maintenance

Original roadside practices, like blanket-spraying herbicides and intensive mowing, increased surface water contamination and were ineffective. Integrated roadside vegetation management practices are environmentally safe and more cost-effective than the original practices.

These techniques include strategic herbicide spot-spraying with herbicide at the correct time to increase effectiveness. Prescribed burning and spot-mowing are implemented seasonally when they are most effective in promoting desired native species growth. Planting native species on roadsides aids in erosion prevention, stormwater management, and brush control.


Johnson County Iowa. (2019). *Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management*.  
<https://www.johnsoncountyiowa.gov/irvm>

Tallgrass Prairie Center. (2024). *Iowa Roadside Management*.  
<https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/iowa-roadside-management>

# NOVEMBER

Photo from TPC Collection

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Al Ehley started at the UNI roadside office in the fall of 1988. The Soil Conservation Service loaned him to UNI to work as the state roadside management specialist for three years. Ehley included county supervisors and engineers in the roadside management process. He knew it was important for all involved with Iowa roads to understand the IRVM program and its importance.

Ehley started having small gatherings between counties annually. Eventually, these gatherings would turn into the annual roadside conference. Ehley also initiated the Roder's Digest newsletter, the yearly calendar poster, and the implementation of a winter meeting with roadside managers. In 1992, Ehley returned to the Soil Conservation Service.

Eells, J. (2016, May 5). *Interview with Kirk Henderson.*

Eells, J. (2017). *Iowa's Living Roadway Trust Fund and Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Program.* E Resources Group, LLC.

Al Ehley

DECEMBER

Photo by Andrea Fager



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# In Memory of Matt Sherman



Photo of Matt Sherman in roadside remnant on 135th St, west of Dawson, Iowa in Dallas County by Doug Sheeley

## Our Roadside Warrior

Matt Sherman attended Hawkeye Community College in 1998 to study integrated roadside vegetation management. He interned with Doug Sheeley during the summer of 1999 in Dallas County. Matt graduated from HCC with an Associate of Applied Science degree in Natural Resources Management in May 2000. He became the roadside manager of Allamakee County following graduation. Matt became assistant biologist of Dallas County in 2001, working with his mentor, Doug Sheeley. Matt died January 9, 2003, at the age of 23.

Scholarship Application PDF



Buchanan County Roadside Office  
1511 1st Street East  
Independence, Iowa 50644  
(563) 920-2581

*Association for Integrated  
Roadside Management*

## Matt Sherman Memorial Scholarship

Two \$500 scholarships are being offered in Matt's name because, in his short professional life, he exemplified what a roadside manager is. His passion for prairies and using prairie species to vegetate the landscape soon became the passion of those around him.

The purpose of AFIRM, as stated in its by-laws: Support the integrated approach to roadside vegetation management by:

1. Promoting integrated roadside vegetation management for all Iowa roadsides.
  - Collecting and disseminating information about best roadside vegetation management practices.
  - Cooperating with organizations interested in integrated roadside vegetation management.
2. Promote the professional development of roadside vegetation management.

**For more information  
please contact Sherlyn  
Hazen at the Buchanan  
County Roadside  
Office.**



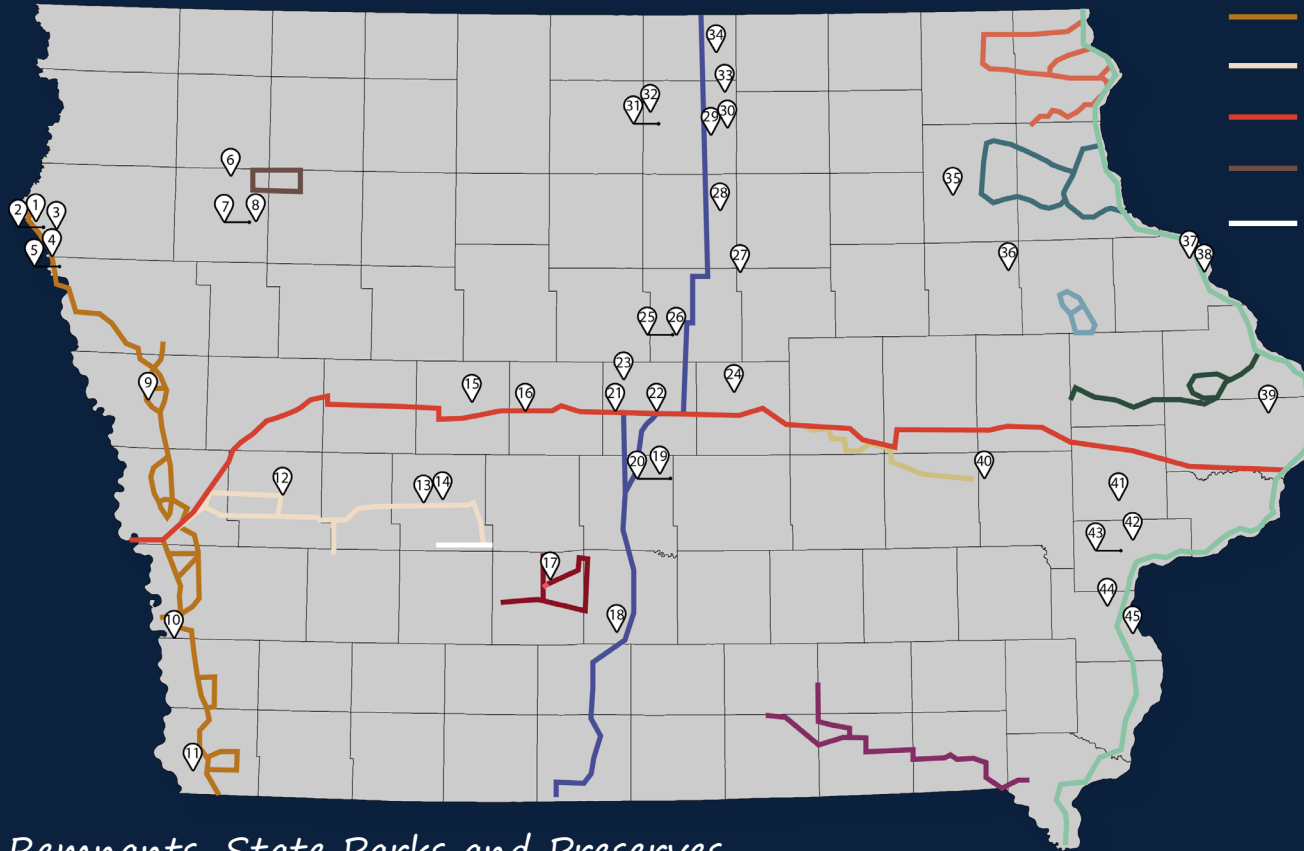
Drawing by Lora Friest



# Prairie Remnants Near Scenic Byways

## Legend

- Loess Hills National Scenic Byway
- Covered Bridges Scenic Byway
- Western Skies Scenic Byway
- Jefferson Highway Heritage Byway
- Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway
- Historic Hills Scenic Byway
- Glacial Trail Scenic Byway
- Iowa Valley Scenic Byway
- White Pole Road Scenic Byway
- Driftless Area Scenic Byway
- River Bluffs Scenic Byway
- Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway
- Grant Wood Scenic Byway
- Iowa Great River Road National Scenic Byway



## Additional Resources

Iowa Prairie Network

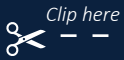


Iowa DOT: Iowa's Scenic and Heritage Byways



## Remnants, State Parks and Preserves

- |   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Broken Kettle Grasslands</b><br/><i>Westfield, Iowa</i></li> <li>2. <b>Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>15561 260th St., Westfield, Iowa</i></li> <li>3. <b>Knapp Prairie</b><br/><i>18958 Weber Rd., Westfield, Iowa</i></li> <li>4. <b>Mount Talbot Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>Sioux City, Iowa</i></li> <li>5. <b>Sioux City Prairie Preserve</b><br/><i>Sioux City, Iowa</i></li> <li>6. <b>Steele Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>Larrabee, Iowa</i></li> <li>7. <b>Nestor Stiles State Preserve</b><br/><i>5676 V Ave., Aurelia, Iowa</i></li> <li>8. <b>Prescott Prairie</b><br/><i>Aurelia, Iowa</i></li> <li>9. <b>Turin Loess Hills State Preserve</b><br/><i>Monona, Iowa</i></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. <b>Folsom Point Prairie</b><br/><i>50365 Brohard Ave., Council Bluffs, Iowa</i></li> <li>11. <b>Waubonsie State Park</b><br/><i>2585 Waubonsie Park Rd., Hamburg, Iowa</i></li> <li>12. <b>Dinesen Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>County Rd. M36, Kirkman, Iowa</i></li> <li>13. <b>Sheeder Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>220th St., Guthrie Center, Iowa</i></li> <li>14. <b>Bundt Prairie</b><br/><i>Guthrie Center, Iowa</i></li> <li>15. <b>Scheurman Prairie</b><br/><i>Dana, Iowa</i></li> <li>16. <b>Harrier Marsh WMA</b><br/><i>Ogden, Iowa</i></li> <li>17. <b>Hanson Prairie Preserve</b><br/><i>Nature Trail, Winterset, Iowa</i></li> <li>18. <b>Rolling Thunder Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>15565 118th Ave., Indianola, Iowa</i></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>19. <b>Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt</b><br/><i>8700 NE 126th Ave., Maxwell, Iowa</i></li> <li>20. <b>Engelinger Marsh</b><br/><i>11961 NE 118th Ave., Maxwell, Iowa</i></li> <li>21. <b>Ames High School Prairie and Preserve</b><br/><i>Ames High Dr., Ames, Iowa</i></li> <li>22. <b>Carroll Prairie</b><br/><i>61250 200th St., Nevada, Iowa</i></li> <li>23. <b>Marietta Sand Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>Knapp Ave., Marshalltown, Iowa</i></li> <li>24. <b>Doolittle Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>14249 560th Ave., Story City, Iowa</i></li> <li>25. <b>West Hubbard Prairie</b><br/><i>IA-175, Hubbard, Iowa</i></li> <li>26. <b>East Hubbard Prairie</b><br/><i>18930 IA-175, Hubbard, Iowa</i></li> <li>27. <b>Blackmun Prairie</b><br/><i>Ackley, Iowa</i></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. <b>Creeden Prairie</b><br/><i>2250 200th St., Aredale, Iowa</i></li> <li>29. <b>Blazingstar Prairie</b><br/><i>180th St., Rockwell, Iowa</i></li> <li>30. <b>Limestone Prairie Preserve</b><br/><i>225th St., Rockford, Iowa</i></li> <li>31. <b>Walch Prairie</b><br/><i>10811 190th St., Swaledale, Iowa</i></li> <li>32. <b>Hoffman Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>US-18, Ventura, Iowa</i></li> <li>33. <b>Wilkinson Pioneer Park</b><br/><i>Nora Springs, Iowa</i></li> <li>34. <b>Turkeyfoot Prairie</b><br/><i>Northwood, Iowa</i></li> <li>35. <b>Fritz Prairie</b><br/><i>18460 T Ave., Hawkeye, Iowa</i></li> <li>36. <b>Quigley-Slattery Heritage Prairie</b><br/><i>2938 180th St., Winthrop, Iowa</i></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>37. <b>Pohlman Prairie Preserve</b><br/><i>13491 US-52 N, Dubuque, Iowa</i></li> <li>38. <b>Prairie Ridge Foot Trail</b><br/><i>10844 Mines of Spain Rd., Dubuque, Iowa</i></li> <li>39. <b>Manikowski Prairie</b><br/><i>370th Ave., Goose Lake, Iowa</i></li> <li>40. <b>Williams Prairie State Preserve</b><br/><i>Grabin Rd. NW, Oxford, Iowa</i></li> <li>41. <b>Rochester Cemetery</b><br/><i>1180 Cemetery Rd., Tipton, Iowa</i></li> <li>42. <b>Wiese Slough State Game Management Area</b><br/><i>Atalissa, Iowa</i></li> <li>43. <b>Cedar Bluffs Recreation Area</b><br/><i>2727 Casey Ave., Letts, Iowa</i></li> <li>44. <b>Wilson Prairie</b><br/><i>10400 Co Rd. G44X, Muscatine, Iowa</i></li> <li>45. <b>Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge</b><br/><i>10728 Co Rd. X61, Wapello, Iowa</i></li> </ol> |
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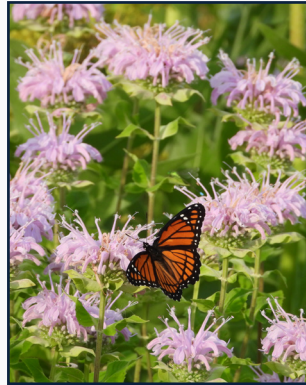
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# Common Species in Iowa's Roadsides



## *Asclepias tuberosa* Butterfly milkweed

Height: 1–2 ft  
Leaves and stem: narrow leaves with smooth tops and fuzzy undersides, fuzzy stem  
Flower: orange dense flowers that look like they have skirts  
Fruit/seed head: narrow pods containing seeds with silky, fluffy plumes



## *Monarda fistulosa* Wild bergamot

Height: 2–4 ft  
Leaves and stem: egg-shaped leaves and a square stem, both with a strong scent  
Flower: lavender circular cluster  
Fruit/seed head: smooth, brown and oval



## *Dalea purpurea* Purple prairie clover

Height: 1–3 ft  
Leaves and stem: small and compound leaves that are denser at the plant base  
Flower: purple, pipe cleaner shaped spikes  
Fruit/seed head: strong scented seeds



## *Panicum virgatum* Switchgrass

Height: 3–6 ft  
Leaves and stem: thin, green blades that turn yellow during the fall  
Flower: red to purple pyramidal flower heads  
Fruit/seed head: narrowly oval



## *Zizia aurea* Golden zizia

Height: 1–3 ft  
Leaves and stem: compound leaves in groups of three, leaflets lance-shaped  
Flower: small, yellow inward folding blooms  
Fruit/seed head: flattened ovals



## *Silphium laciniatum* Compassplant

Height: 3–10 ft  
Leaves and stem: large, deeply lobed basal leaves with a shark-skin like texture  
Flower: sunflower-like, with yellow center  
Fruit/seed head: large and flat

The Iowa Living Roadway Trust Fund (LRTF) and its partners have helped Iowa counties and communities manage roadside and trail plantings for over 30 years in a cost-effective way that provides habitat for pollinators and improves water quality. A special thanks for sponsoring this calendar.

[www.iowadot.gov/lrtf](http://www.iowadot.gov/lrtf)



The Tallgrass Prairie Center (TPC) is a center within the University of Northern Iowa that empowers people to value and restore resilient, diverse tallgrass prairie.

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



Green Iowa AmeriCorps (GIA) works to empower Iowa's communities and school districts to make conservation-minded decisions and improvements. These skills and tools are applied with the Iowa Roadside Management Program and the Department of Natural Resources to help educate and maintain thriving roadsides and trails.

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



Front cover photo of Quigley-Slattery Heritage Prairie by Laura Walter.

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[tallgrassprairiecenter.org/roadsides](http://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/roadsides)

All photos by Laura Walter

