

# Steps to Success - A Wildflower Tour Planning Guide



The Kansas Native Plant Society has prepared this guide to help you plan and stage a wildflower tour in your area. The guide is a shopping list of ideas that you can use when creating your tour.

Your wildflower tour event can be as basic as meeting to tour a single area and nothing else.

It may include several different stops with attendees riding buses.

It may also include lunch or dinner following the tour.

For the most extensive tours, blooming plants are marked with numbered flags just before the tour. A booklet is printed for each tour attendee and includes the names of the numbered plants and information about the plants.

Noting area dining, shopping, entertainment and lodging options are additional attractions you may consider offering your wildflower tour attendees. A wildflower tour is an excellent way to promote and attract outsiders to your community. By advertising local attractions, it gives area businesses reasons to be involved in a more extensive tour.

Tasks required for putting on a successful tour follow

- Determine tour dates
- Determine tour leaders
- Determine tour site(s)
- Create an itinerary/flyer
- Publicize tour

Optional tasks for a successful tour

- Create plant list with markers
- Organize a meal or refreshments
- Supply bottled water
- Organize mass transportation
- Organize a traveling bathroom
- Get Sponsors
- Handle registration of attendees
- Locate a special speaker
- Offer a special class

Information for the construction of this guide generously shared by: Anita Smith (Wilson County Wildflower Tour), Harold Kline (Barber County Wildflower Tour), Gary Weisenberger (Toronto), Carl Paulie (Neosho County Wildflower Tour) and Phyllis Scherich of Comanche County.

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## Things to do 6 to 12 months before the tour

- Determine dates for the tour. Generally May and June are best for spring wildflowers and grasses, while September and October are best for fall wildflowers. The majority of prairie grasses are at their peak in the fall. Consider morning tours and evening tours to avoid the heat of the day. Many tours are held on weekends but weekday evening tours are popular too.
- Choose a tour date that does not conflict with similar events or holidays. Consult the Kansas Native Plant Society web page calendar for tour dates already planned in your area. Several Counties have long established annual wildflower tour dates (Barber, Chase, Cherokee, Neosho and Wilson).
- Identify interested persons in your area who are willing to volunteer on planning committees. Committees may include: wildflower identification, event publicity, transportation coordination, dining, lodging, informational presentation, entertainment, booklet preparation, business coordinator, bathroom facilities.
- Consider who your target audience is. They may include land owners, ranchers, gardeners, youth groups, or city dwellers. Plan to publicize the event to the groups you want to target.
- Obtain the assistance of knowledgeable individuals who can provide wildflower identification in your area and serve as wildflower tour guides. Try to have one guide for every 10 to 12 attendees you anticipate. Large groups with only one leader tend to be difficult for the attendees to see the plants while the leader is talking.
- If a booklet is being created, determine a list of potential wildflowers to be seen on the day of the tour. If possible, obtain drawings or photographs for your booklet. The booklet may be as basic as a listing of plant names. It will be more interesting and useful if it contains scientific name, plant family name, identifying characteristics, grazing use, wildlife use, medicinal uses, and historical uses. You may utilize the following online resources to assist with plant identification:
  - [www.lib.ksu.edu/wildflower](http://www.lib.ksu.edu/wildflower)
  - [spuds.agron.ksu.edu](http://spuds.agron.ksu.edu)
  - [www.skyways.org/orgs/fordco/wildflowers/index.html](http://www.skyways.org/orgs/fordco/wildflowers/index.html)
- The following offices may be consulted for ideas for potential wildflower tour sites and also for individuals knowledgeable about wildflowers and grasses.
  - Federal National Resources and Conservation Services NRCS  
[www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov)
  - Resource Conservation and Development RC&D  
[www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/html](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/partnerships/rcd/html)
  - District Conservation Service DCC  
[www.sccdistrict.com/dist\\_ks.htm](http://www.sccdistrict.com/dist_ks.htm)
  - Kansas Native Plant Society KNPS  
[www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org](http://www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org)
  - Kansas Farm Bureau KFB

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- [www.kfb.org](http://www.kfb.org)
  - Kansas Farm Service Agency FSA
  - [www.fsa.usda.gov/ks](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ks)
  - Biology departments at your local colleges and universities
  - State, Federal and local parks
- Private property owners in you area may also manage pastures where native plants and wildflowers are abundant and allow permission for a tour stop. Obtain permission from landowners for property access in advance and learn the history of the property and the family.
- Remember that different properties will have different numbers and types of wildflowers in bloom depending on their geology and past management, so choose several different potential tour sites to provide the best wildflower showings for the tour. Native hay fields offer some of the greatest diversity. Pastures that have been sprayed or overgrazed will offer the least diversity.
- Name your tour and give it a theme. It can be as simple as the "X" County Wildflower Tour or something like "Wildflowers of the Flint Hills". Use it in your publicity flyer, for the booklet to be distributed to attendees, and in any other publicity that you do.
- Create a colorful flyer using your tour theme name, contact information, gathering location, colorful plant photos, fee information (if charging), reminder to wear appropriate outdoor clothing, and suggest to bring bug spray, water and sun block. The flyer should be easy to read and eye catching at a glance. Be sure to include the sponsors of your tour.
- Determine whether roads will likely be accessible to the site by passenger vehicles during your tour date, or if school buses or other mass transit will be able to access the roads. Your local school bus system may be willing to provide busses to transport attendees to the tour site from a central gathering place.
- Plan for bad weather. Either have a rain date or state that the tour will take place rain or shine.
- Have a registration process in place for your tour. Plan to collect names, phone number, mailing address, email address, and number attending. If the tour plans change at the last minute, you should be able to communicate with your attendees. The number attending is critical for planning for supplies and transportation.
- Determine a fee to charge if necessary to offset the cost of the tour.
- Find sponsors to help offset the cost. Some sponsors to consider are:
  - NRCS
  - Extension Office
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Local Businesses

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- Mail your flyer to those registering so they will have the contact information, time and location information for themselves and to share with others. Contact those who attended last year's tour to notify of the upcoming tour.
- Choose a registration deadline a week or two prior to your tour date, so that you have adequate time to finalize plans for dining, transportation and other amenities. If you are collecting a fee for the tour you will also have time to collect payments and plan for and purchase goods to be provided. Also, if you plan to offer a tour the next year, you will have a list of people to notify.
- Contact local business owners who may be willing to offer a discount to your wildflower tour attendees for shopping, dining, entertainment or lodging. These businesses should be supplied with copies of your flyer, and also list them in the booklet, including a description of the business, a description of their discount, street address and phone number. For people who are not familiar with your area, a brief description of the business location will be very helpful.
- Determine a gathering place for the wildflower tour attendees. Depending on the scale of your tour, an indoor meeting place such as a school or community building may be appropriate and provide restroom facilities, a speaker system and a projection screen.
- Coffee and a simple breakfast may be provided before the tour. Lunch or dinner may be offered after the tour. Consider whether a local group is willing and able to provide "home made" food items. A Meal gives people a chance to socialize after seeing the various plants, and is a favorite activity among attendees.



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## Things to do 2 to 6 months before the tour

- Once the details of the tour are determined, begin to publicize your Wildflower Tour. Your publicity should clearly state who to contact to register for the tour.
- Time your publicity for maximum saturation within 2-3 months of the tour date. Please note that some publications and newsletters may require 2 to 6 months of advance notice before printing dates.
- The following are good publicity venues.
  - Kansas Native Plant Society
  - Local Newspaper
  - Grass & Grain publication
  - Local Rural Electric Cooperative publication
  - Kansas Traveler Publication
  - NRCS Office
  - Conservation District Office
  - Research & Extension Office
  - Local businesses such as convenience stores and restaurants may allow you to post flyers in their windows or on their bulletin boards.
- If you plan to post your flyer, plan to bring your own supply of tape and push pins. It may be more effective to tape several permanent flyers in highly visible window areas and on the counter near cash registers than to leave a stack of flyers in an out of the way place.
- Begin to prepare your booklet for the tour date.
  - For the numbered plant section, use a spreadsheet to type the common names of potential plants and sort the list by common name. This list will be taken to the site a few days before the event and updated with sequential numbers.
  - Plant marking flags can be purchased inexpensively from BenMeadows.com (search for "stake flags". Bundles of 100 flags are less than \$10.
  - Prepare a listing of businesses and people that assisted or sponsored your tour, thanking them, and include the tour guides' names and affiliations. List the businesses who have offered a "special offer" in your booklet. Be sure to include complete address and phone numbers for people who are not familiar with your area.
  - Consider adding a map to your booklet, indicating the locations of tour stops, unless on private property.
  - You may also want to mark the map with locations of interest to people who are new to your area, and point out the businesses locations that have assisted with planning your tour.

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## Things to do 1 month before the tour

- Preview native plant tour areas to inventory anticipated blooms on your tour date. Confirm that your booklet includes plants you anticipate being in bloom during the tour.
- Confirm the number of pre-paid registered attendees and determine the amount and sources for coffee, food, water, booklets and bug spray, sun block and bathroom facilities necessary for expected attendees. Add a few extra of everything for last minute registrants.
- Confirm your meeting place, pre-tour presentation, entertainment, transportation, and bathroom facilities at tour location. Reconfirm that discounts offered by local businesses will be available to tour attendees. Plan for adequate trash/waste disposal at the meeting place and sites.
- Finalize the booklet except for numbers for flagged plant numbers. The booklet should include thanks to all volunteers and tour guides, advertisers, property owners, education institutions, reference materials and any assistance offered for your tour.

## Things to do 2 days before the tour

- Visit tour site and mark wildflower plants and grasses with numbered flags. Take your potential plant list to the tour sites when you post numbered flags. Assign a sequential number to each plant on your spreadsheet as you flag them. Before printing the plant list, resort by the flag number, so that your list is the order that the attendees will encounter the plants. Try to make a loop through the site and space the flags out so that there isn't congestion by the attendees. Make the loop start at the road, loop through the site, and end back at the road where the tour began.
- Sort the booklet by flag number before printing, so that your tour attendees encounter blooms in numerical order, making it easier for them and your guides to follow the flow of the tour.
- Plan to set up a check in location for tour attendees, to track the number of registered participants and also to note any unregistered attendees that may need to pay a fee.



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## Things to do the day of the tour

- If you are meeting in a building, post your flyer on the door or near the meeting place so that attendees know they are in the correct location.
- Set up a check-in table and have several people available to answer questions and check in registered attendees.
- Consider making name tags available for attendees. You can make out name tags in advance from your registration information
- Have your tour guides meet and mingle with the tour attendees, so they can gauge what level of guidance may be needed.
- Remind your attendees to use sun block and bug spray, where the bathroom facilities will be located, what time the tour is scheduled to begin.
- At the tour site, assign 8 to 12 people to each tour guide. Some attendees may already have knowledge of wildflowers and others none at all. Pass out the booklet with the numbered plants and additional information or advertising.
- Your flowers are marked, have each tour guide allow time for photographs and discussion about each plant, leaf type, number of petals, protein content, historical use, etc., that make each bloom even more interesting.
- Ask your attendees how they heard about your tour and the reason they came. Use this information for planning next years tour and determining if there are any changes you need to make.

## Things to do after the tour:

- Send "thank yous" to your volunteers, guides, sponsors and all who offered assistance.
- Celebrate the tour with a gathering for your volunteers and discuss the highlights of the tour and future improvements. Consider whether your target audience matched the actual turn out. Make preliminary plans for next year's tour.
- Be sure to return to the tour sites and pick up your numbered flags, along with anything else that may have been left behind.

## Feedback

- The Kansas Native Plant Society hopes you found this guide useful in planning your tour. Please let us know if you used this guide and let us add your tour to our events calendar.
- Please feel free to give feedback to the Kansas Native Plant Society for any suggestions or improvements you would add to this guide. We are always learning!