

Plant A Prairie
a project of the Kansas Native Plant Society Gary and
June Kiesen Memorial Fund

Garden Kits
to Kansas Teachers



Kansas Native Plant Society (KNPS) offers “Plant A Prairie” garden kits to Kansas teachers. Applications are taken in the spring (beginning April 1), and live plants and supporting materials are delivered in mid-September. Kansas teachers K-12, as well as leaders of youth organizations, are eligible to participate in the free program.

The Plant A Prairie garden, which can be completed in about a week, is sized to fit the needs of the classroom teacher. Students will enjoy the hands-on experience of planting and tending their mini-prairie. They can learn the basics of plant biology and prairie ecology. And, the completed garden helps preserve our natural heritage by providing a way station for bees, butterflies and birds.

Come mid-September, participating teachers receive 32 live native plants—enough for an 8’ x 10’ prairie garden—delivered directly to the classroom. Each prairie kit includes 8 species that are hand-selected by Taylor Creek Nursery to match local growing conditions.

The Plant A Prairie kit contains a mix of grasses/sedges (25%) and wildflowers (75%), heavily weighted with spring and fall blooming plants, including milkweed for Monarch butterflies. The kit contains vigorous, easy-to-grow perennials, well suited to the extremes of Kansas heat and cold.

Funding for Plant A Prairie is provided by the Gary and June Kliesen Memorial Fund. Gary and June were active KNPS members and advocates for native plants and prairie restoration. The purpose of the Kliesen Fund is to engage youth in starting prairie gardens. Donations to support this project can be made to the Kansas Native Plant Society, designated to “Plant A Prairie.”

Key dates to remember

April-mid May – open enrollment (See Application form for exact dates).

Mid-September—your plants and supporting materials arrive.

Following Spring – Send us a photo of your garden and complete a short survey.

Learn more about Plant A Prairie and how to apply below....

- **Who is eligible**
- **What is included in the prairie kit**
- **Links to lesson plans and other teaching resources**
- **Planting and care instructions**

Who is eligible to apply

Kansas teachers K-12 are eligible, as well as leaders of youth groups, such as 4-H, scouting and others. Simply complete the one-page application and return it by the deadline. Plant A Prairie kits are free, but availability is limited. Early application is recommended. Successful applicants will describe (1) a clear educational plan with (2) a strong youth involvement.

What is included with the prairie garden kit

- **32 individual potted plants**, each hand-selected to match the local growing conditions (as indicated on your application). Plants will be shipped in a live plant carton from Taylor Creek Restoration Nursery to arrive mid-September. Plants are about 8 inches tall; some taller plants may be trimmed at the nursery to fit. Note: you will get an email alert prior to plant shipment.
- **A KNPS plant poster** with attractive color photos of more than 50 common native plants (shipped separately). The poster is a useful reference tool for the classroom.
- **An attractive “Plant A Prairie” sign** to place in your prairie garden (shipped separately).
- **Links to lesson plans** and other teaching resources. See below.
- **Planting and care instructions** (see below). These include handy tips to assure your garden will be a success.
- **Technical support via phone or email.** A KNPS plant specialist will answer your questions about designing, planting and caring for your prairie garden. **Email contact: PlantAPrairie@gmail.com**
- **A list of Plant A Prairie plants** with their common *and* scientific names and other useful information (See below) to be used for reference. For example, the list contains information on plant height (tall, medium and short) and season of bloom.



Butterfly Milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa* and
Wild Strawberry *Fragaria virginiana*

Links to lesson plans, educational standards, etc.

Some of the sites below offer free downloadable materials; some offer publications for sale; and, some require a subscription fee to download materials.

Tallgrass Prairie Center-University of Northern Iowa (elementary/middle school)

<https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/lesson-plans>

Earth Partnership-University of Wisconsin (100 activities, elementary/middle school)

<https://www.projectwet.org/what-we-do/publications/standards>

Dyck Arboretum of the Plains—Earth Partnership for Schools

Dyckarboretum.org/earth-partnership-for-schools/

Project WILD (K-12: wildlife conservation)

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/project-wild>

Project Learning Tree (Environmental education, all levels)

<https://www.plt.org/environmental-education-curriculum/>

Teacher Link (social studies and children's literature)

teacherlink.ed.usa.edu/tlresources/units/byrnes-literature/alleman.html

Missouri Botanical Garden-educational resources

www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/learn-discovery/students.teachers/educational-resources

Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education, KACEE, (Kansas environmental education standards, plan, and other resources)

www.kacee.org/what-environmental-education-0

Links to plant descriptions and other information

Michael Haddock, Kansas State University (Kansas wildflowers and grasses)

www.kswildflower.org

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (North America wildflower information)

www.wildflower.org/plant

Kansas Native Plant Society—Wildflower Gallery (photos of many native plants)

www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org/gallery.php

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)—Plant Database (Search by plant name; maps of distribution; list of pollinators, and more)

<https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/java/>

Missouri Botanical Garden—Plant Finder (Search plant by name; photos and basic information)

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfindersearch.aspx>

Planting and care instructions

1. **Prepare the garden site.** For best results, pick a site with at least 4 hours sun daily; more is even better. Plants will require 12-30 inches of space when mature, less for shorter plants, more for tall. Allow another 1' around the edge of your garden for border. Your finished plot should equal an 8' x 10' or 8' x 12' space.

If the plot you've chosen is filled with grass (if not, skip to next step), you will need to kill and remove the grass. You may kill grass by covering the ground with a dark tarp or black plastic to smother the grass. Allow 4 weeks or more to kill the grass. You may also use a chemical application for this step. For best weed suppression, cover the space with cardboard or paper, then mulch. Water well. A double-ground leaf mulch is good, but hardwood or bark, straw or dried grass clippings work well, too. Apply no more than one or two inches deep. You may define the edge of a new garden with a shallow trench filled with a thick layer of mulch to keep out invasive grass. Rocks or even small logs can also be used.

If the garden plot is clear of grass, simply cover the soil with mulch and water thoroughly.

2. **When plants arrive**, remove the ENTIRE TRAY from the box, leaving the pots in their places. Move the tray to a shady area and water well. There are eight rows in the tray containing four plants per row. Typically, only the front plant in the row is labeled, and that label applies to all the unmarked plants behind it. You will need to create a label for EACH plant (craft sticks labeled with pencil work well, but can get lost in mulch and aren't permanent). Place a label in each pot.
3. **Layout design for the garden.** We recommend you first create a rough plan on paper. Space plants according to mature size. As a rough guide, allow short plants 12"-18" space; medium, 18"-24"; and tall, 24"-30". Consult the plant list (see below) to determine the plant height (tall, medium or short) to aid you in your plan. Place taller plants toward the back, or in the center as a focal point. Step down with medium plants; position short plants near the edge. For a natural look, avoid placing plants in a straight line.
4. **Planting Day.** Choose a cloudy day, if possible. With plants still in their pots, place all plants according to your plan. Expect to adjust and rearrange, but remember that plants will spread and fill empty spaces. Consider the before and after photos below and trust your research on spacing. **Push gently on the pot bottom to remove the plant.** Keep working at it until it comes free. Do not pull plant out by its stem as that may cause injury. With a hand trowel, move enough mulch away to dig a hole twice the size of the pot. Break up any clumps and add a little (optional) potting soil to the hole to give roots a good start. Insert plant to the correct depth. Replace soil and press down to make good soil contact with the roots. Replace the mulch, taking care to not cover the young plant. Mark plant with its label, **consider adding a flag**. Water thoroughly. Repeat steps for remaining plants.
5. **Initial plant care.** Water 2 to 3 times a week (if no rain) and remove any weeds. Water through October when plants go dormant. If any plants are pushed from the ground in winter, push them back carefully. Replace labels as needed.
6. **First spring.** Identify your plants as they emerge before beginning to pull weeds. Reapply mulch where needed to suppress weeds and retain water. Discontinue watering at this point unless there is an extreme drought. Plants are putting down deep roots and are self-sufficient.

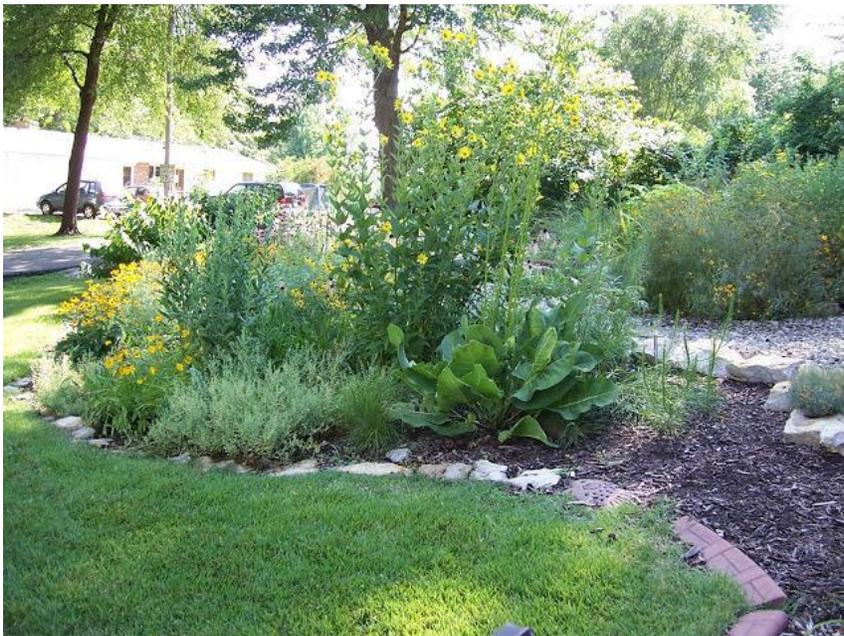
Second and third years. Continue to mulch on the garden edges; normal plant litter may suffice as mulch in the garden's center. The plants will shade out most weeds. Dead stems and flower heads left standing through winter provide food for birds and habitat for native bees and other insects.

Wait until early spring to cut back old stems, if desired, but leave 12" standing for habitat and support of taller plants.

BEFORE AND AFTER



First season in a newly installed garden.



The same garden in its third season.