

## FRIENDS OF THE CHICAGO RIVER

## Plants of the Chicago River Watershed



**Wild Bergamot** **P**  
*Monarda fistulosa* Purple flowers

Bergamot is a member of the mint family and has a very pleasing scent. It is used as an ingredient in herbal teas. It is widely used in butterfly gardens.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Cup Plant** **P**  
*Silphium perfoliatum* Yellow flowers

The leaves of the cup plant connect to the stem in such a way that they form a cuplike structure that can hold water. Cup plant has leaves rough like sandpaper.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Black-Eyed Susan** **P**  
*Rudbeckia hirta* Yellow flowers

Native Americans used this plant to treat snake bites, colds and worms. Juice from the roots had been used as drops for earaches.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Prairie Dock** **P**  
*Silphium terebinthinaceum* Yellow flowers

This plant has rough leaves and a hard sap that was chewed as gum by Native Americans. It is drought-resistant and grows seeds are a food source for birds.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Dense Blazing Star** **P**  
*Liatris spicata* Pink/Purple flowers

Dense Blazing star has been cultivated and is used by florists in bouquets. It is attractive to bees, butterflies and birds, but deer will not eat it.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Big Bluestem Grass** **P**  
*Andropogon gerardii*

Big bluestem is a definitive prairie grass and its flower resembles a "turkey foot." It was used by Native Americans to treat a variety of digestive ailments.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Rough Blazing Star** **P**  
*Liatris aspera* Pink/Purple flowers

Rough blazing star is a native of the prairies. It is typically found in poor, rocky, and often acidic soil where there is little other vegetation.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Indian Grass** **P**  
*Sorghastrum nutans*

This native grass is found in prairies and meadows. It is also effective on slopes for erosion control. Numerous songbirds and small mammals eat the seeds.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Purple Prairie Clover** **P**  
*Dalea purpurea* Purple flowers

This plant is intolerant to overgrazing and was used by Native Americans to brew tea to reduce fever in measles victims. Purple prairie clover fixes nitrogen in the soil.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Little Bluestem Grass** **P**  
*Schizachyrium scoparium*

In the fall and winter little bluestem turns a bright orange color which is quite striking. It is an important native grass that provides food and cover for wildlife.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Prairie Coneflower** **P**  
*Ratibida pinnata* Yellow flowers

Also known as gray-headed coneflower, this plant is a strong survivor in former prairies where most of the original plants have perished. Its flowers attract butterflies.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Prairie Cord Grass** **P**  
*Spartina pectinata*

Also known as Slough grass or Ripgut, because it prefers wet areas and has extremely sharp leaves. This is one of the tallest native grass at nearly ten feet tall.

Larry Allain @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



**Purple Coneflower** **P**  
*Echinacea purpurea* Purple flowers

The purple coneflower has been used as an immune system booster in teas even today. It is sold by its genus name Echinacea. It has a very large flower.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Switch Grass** **P**  
*Panicum virgatum*

The roots of switchgrass may reach depths of ten feet or more. Switchgrass will grow in partial shade and it turns a nice pale yellow to bluish tint in the fall.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Culver's Root** **P**  
*Veronicastrum virginicum* White flowers

Culver's root is in the snapdragon family. Its roots were used in traditional medicine to induce vomiting. Its seeds are easily collected and it re-seeds easily.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Butterfly Milkweed** **P**  
*Asclepias tuberosa* Orange flowers

Butterfly milkweed is called so as it attracts many species of butterflies, including monarchs, swallowtails and painted ladies. It is resistant to browsing by deer.

Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey

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**Common Mountain Mint** **P**  
*Pycnanthemum virginianum* *White flowers*  
 Mountain mint smells just like its name! Only bee-lovers should consider this plant for their gardens. Mountain mint has leaves and flowers that are faintly sweet.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Wild Quinine** **P**  
*Parthenium integrifolium* *White flowers*  
 There was a brief demand to harvest wild quinine as a medicine to combat malaria during World War I. It prefers sandy to loamy soils that are well-drained.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Rattlesnake Master** **P**  
*Eryngium yuccifolium* *White flowers*  
 This plant was named so because it was thought that it could cure rattlesnake bites, which is not true. It is unusual in that it has parallel-veined leaves.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Rosinweed** **P**  
*Silphium integrifolium* *Yellow flowers*  
 Rosinweed has broad, lance-shaped leaves that have small stiff hairs on top & bottom. It produces a fragrant resin that was chewed as a gum by Native Americans  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Shooting Star** **P**  
*Dodecatheon meadii* *Pink/purple flowers*  
 This plant prefers meadows and prairies of the eastern tallgrass prairie. It has hollow, leafless stalk divided at the top into slender branches, each with one flower.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Compass Plant** **P**  
*Silphium laciniatum* *Yellow flowers*  
 This plant is named so because the leaves supposedly turn toward the north. It has very rough leaves and a hard sap that was chewed as gum by Native Americans.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Sneezeweed** **P**  
*Helenium autumnale* *Yellow flowers*  
 This plant, also known as Helen's flower, is mildly poisonous to livestock. Settlers used the dried flowers as snuff. It is very attractive to bees, moths and butterflies.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Sawtooth Sunflower** **P**  
*Helianthus grosseserratus* *Yellow flowers*  
 The seeds of the sawtooth were eaten baked or ground for use in flour and as a source for oil. Pheasants, goldfinches, doves, and deer use it for food.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Whorled Milkweed** **P**  
*Asclepias verticillata* *White flowers*  
 A mildly-poisonous plant, whorled milkweed sap was used experimentally to provide a rubber substitute during WWII. It's commonly found throughout dry prairies.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Common Milkweed** **P/W**  
*Asclepias syriaca* *Pink flowers*  
 This milkweed has thick pods with cottony seeds inside that were once used to fill life jackets on boats. Native Americans made sugar by boiling the flowers.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Cardinal Flower** **P/W**  
*Lobelia cardinalis* *Red flowers*  
 Hummingbirds and butterflies are strongly attracted to the cardinal flower. Beautiful but deadly, this plant is poisonous. It contains alkaloids like those in nicotine.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Golden Alexanders** **P/R**  
*Zizia aurea* *Yellow flowers*  
 In the wild, this plant grows in rich, moist woods, open meadows and on riverbanks. Early settlers thought this plant was a cure for syphilis.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Queen Anne's Lace** **X-NN**  
*Daucus carota* *White flowers*  
 Queen Anne's lace is actually a type of carrot. It is primarily found on roadsides and abandoned fields. It is native to Asia and a weed in Europe and here in America.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Cutleaf Teasel** **I-NN**  
*Dipsacus laciniatus* *Pale purple flowers*  
 Teasel invades prairies and woodlands. It is an extremely aggressive and very hard to control as it can come back even if there is only a little of the root left.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Bull Thistle** **I-NN**  
*Cirsium vulgare* *Pink/purple flowers*  
 The large spikes on this plant make it unpleasant and unpalatable to many animals. It invades prairies and woodlands with its spiny leaves and annoying stems.  
 Dan Busemeyer, Illinois Natural History Survey



**Red Clover** **I-NN**  
*Trifolium pretense* *Pink/red flowers*  
 Red clover, a member of the pea family, is found on roadsides and old fields but can invade prairies. It was introduced from Europe as a hay and pasture crop.  
 Rusty Russell @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

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