

CAJUN PRAIRIE RESTORED SITE, Eunice, La

This is designed for you to use as you walk around the trail and match the picture with the labeled plants along the way. You can also refer to the printed text for more information on each species. This site and the printed material are the property of the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society (www.cajunprairie.org), a non-profit organization. This is a restored Cajun Prairie area and is a glimpse of the vegetation that once covered all of southwest Louisiana. Please do not litter and do not remove any of the plants. Hope you enjoy your visit and please return the printed material for others to use.

1. Eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*) is a rhizomatous perennial member of the grass family (Poaceae). The flowers are in spikes at the tips of the branches and are produced mostly from April to early June but can be seen flowering sporadically thru the rest of the year. The seeds are edible and were reported to be used by Native Americans like popcorn. This species is one of the ancestors of corn.
2. Little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is a clump forming perennial member of the grass family. The flowers are inconspicuous and are in short small rames along the stem. It flowers in late August to early October and then the plant turns a yellow brown color. It is the dominant visible plant in the Eunice site from October until the control burn.
3. Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) is a short rhizomatous perennial member of the grass family. It forms obvious vertical clumps that can be taller than six feet. The flowers are in short digitate rames at the tips of the branches that look like turkey feet hence another common name. The stem color ranges from blue to yellow or even red.
4. Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) is a short rhizomatous perennial member of the grass family. The flowers are in compact elongate panicles at the tips of the braches. The flowers have lots of yellow pollen giving the panicles a yellow tint. This is the latest blooming grass in the prairie as it flowers in late September to October each year. The origin of the name may be traced to the panicles looking like a feather or the two auricles at the bottom of the leaf that look like arrowheads.
5. Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) is a rhizomatous perennial member of the grass family. The flowers are in large open panicles at the tips of the branches. It starts to flower in early July and lasts thru September. The stems are tough and remain erect until next season. The clumps of switchgrass scattered across the Eunice Prairie are very obvious and can be six to seven feet tall. This tough character of the stem led the Caddo Indians to use the stems to make beehive shaped houses in their original homeland of northwest Louisiana.
6. White False Indigo (*Baptisia alba*) is a perennial member of the Fabaceae (Leguminosae) or bean family. The white flowers are in erect racemes and produced April to May. This plant is the tallest of the false indigoes in the Eunice site. The false indigoes are also called “poc poc” plant as the early Europeans used the leaves to make a dye for Easter eggs. The term “poc poc” comes from the custom of tapping two Easter eggs together with the winner being the egg that did not crack. You can produce a dark blue “indigo” dye by boiling the leaves and then letting the boiled mixture sit for an hour or so.
7. Yellow false indigo (*Baptisia sphaerocarpa*) is a perennial member of the Fabaceae (Leguminosae) or bean family. The yellow flowers are in erect racemes and produced in late March through April. This plant is the most common and obvious of the false indigoes in the Eunice site. There are two other yellow flowered species in the Eunice site; yellow drooping false indigo (*Baptisia bracteata*) with racemes that are spreading and yellow pineland false indigo (*Baptisia nuttalliana*) with solitary axillary flowers. All of these plants could be used to make the indigo dye and thus were “poc poc” plants.
8. Hyssop-leaved thoroughwort (*Eupatorium hyssopifolium*) is a perennial member of the Asteraceae (Compositae) or sunflower family. The white disc only flowers are in small heads and the heads are arranged in flat topped inflorescences at the top of the plant. This species flowers from July to October and is one of several white flowering thoroughworts in the Eunice prairie.
9. Slender Bluestem (*Schizachyrium tenerum*) is a clump forming perennial member of the grass family. The flowers are in short small rames along the stem and are never very obvious. The plant is short and spreads laterally. It is one of the few species that is not also found in Midwestern prairies and in Louisiana is found only in the southern half of the state.
10. Blazing star (*Liatis pycnostachya*) is a perennial member of the Asteraceae (Compositae) or sunflower family. It produces a black corm underground and reddish purple (rarely white) flowers that are disc only in heads. The heads are arranged in spikes at the top of the plant and the spikes can be several feet long. The blazing stars are probably the most conspicuous flowers in the prairie. This species flowers from August to October.
11. Blazing star (*Liatis spicata*) is very similar to *Liatis pycnostachya* but differs in having hairs along the rachis (the stem portion of the inflorescence) and flowers from mid July to late August.
12. Butterfly Gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri*) is a perennial member of the Onagraceae. It has white flowers but often with a pink cast with four petals and many stamens. The leaves are simple and alternate. It flowers from April to October.
13. Tall Tickseed (*Coreopsis tripteris*) is a perennial member of the Asteraceae with yellow rays and yellow disc flowers in heads. The leaves are opposite and compound with three leaflets. The plants can be up to six feet tall and flowers from July to October.
14. Beebalm (*Monarda fistulosa*) is a perennial member of the mint family (Lamiaceae) and thus has square stems and opposite leaves. The leaves are simple and have an odor when crushed which has been described as smelling like pizza since it is similar to oregano. The flowers are in clusters near the top of the plant and vary from almost white to dark pink and are produced from May to July.
15. Bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) is a perennial member of the Apocynaceae. It has alternate simple leaves and milky juice in the stem and leaves. The blue flowers are produced in small panicles at the top of the plant from late February to early May. The fruits are long follicles that resemble bean pods. This plant prefers wetter habitats.
16. Compass Plant (*Silphium laciniatum*) is a perennial member of the Asteraceae or sunflower family that can be up to eight feet tall. The flowers are produced from June to October in heads at the top of the plant and consist of yellow rays and yellow discs. The heads are positioned perpendicular to the ground. The leaves are alternate and pinnatifid and are oriented with the wide, flat surfaces east-west and the narrow surfaces north-south, hence the name compass plant. There are reports that this plant was used Midwestern settlers by to determine north-south in the dark by feeling of the orientation of the leaves. It is also an important plant in the writings of Aldo Leopold. When wounded, the stem produces a resin that was chewed like gum by Native Americans.

17. Slender Rosinweed (*Silphium gracile*) is a perennial member of the Asteraceae or sunflower family that can be up to five feet tall. The flowers are produced from March to October in heads at the top of the plant and consist of yellow rays and yellow discs. The heads are positioned perpendicular to the ground. The stem leaves are mostly alternate and simple and with a distinct group of large basal leaves.
18. Bluehearts (*Buchnera americana*) is a perennial in the Scrophulariaceae. The plants are pubescent and turn black upon drying as the plant is a hemi (semi) parasite. The leaves are opposite, simple, coarsely pubescent, and have pinnate major veins. The inflorescence is a terminal spike with blue flowers that are produced from May to October.
19. Sensitive brier (*Mimosa (Schranksia) hystrix*) is a perennial in the Fabaceae or bean family. The leaves are alternate, even bipinnately compound, and the leaflets are asymmetrical and sensitive to touch (they will fold up when touched). The stems are sprawling aboveground stems that could be classified as vines. The inflorescences are axillary pedunculate globose heads of small pink flowers that are produced from May to October.
20. Crimson Eyed Marshmallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) is perennial member of Malvaceae or mallow family. The leaves are alternate, simple, long-petioled, stipuled, and with palmate major veins. The inflorescences are axillary solitary flowers with large white to pink flowers that are produced from June to July or into September. One distinct characteristic of the plant is the many stamens united into a tube in the flower and the large capsule with many black seeds. The plant is usually in wetter sites.
21. Button Snakeroot (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) is a common perennial clump forming member of the Carrot Family (Apiaceae) that is also known as Rattlesnake Master. The white flowers are produced from June to October. It is easily recognized by the sharp spiny "yucca" like leaves and the "carrot" smell to the crushed leaf. It is reported to have some medicinal value and the leaves were used by Native Americans to make sandals. It is used as a cut flower in some areas.
22. Prairie Parsley (*Polytaenia nuttallii*) is a member of the Apiaceae or Carrot family along with parsley, dill, fennel, and other spice plants. It is a biennial (growing leaves only the first year and flowers the second) or perennial (producing flowers for several years after skipping the first year). The plant is a conspicuous part of the early flowering assemblage of plants in the Cajun Prairie producing its yellow flowers in March to early April. The plant has typical carrot family leaves that are much dissected and "parsley" like. The stems are hollow and the plant reaches a height of 2-3 feet. The large seeds are typical carrot family with two seeds per fruit and are yellow to brown. This plant is a host for the black swallowtail caterpillar as are most members of the carrot family.
23. Pale coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*) is a perennial in the Asteraceae or sunflower family. The leaves are alternate and simple; the basal leaves are petioled but the stem leaves are sessile and reduced. The flowers are in heads, and the heads are solitary at the tips of the branches. The ray flowers are pink and the disc flowers purple as this plant flowers from May to July. Another member of this genus is purple coneflower which has larger and usually darker ray flowers.
24. Azure Blue Sage (*Salvia azurea*) is a perennial member of the Lamiaceae or mint family. The stems are square in cross-section and the leaves are opposite, simple, and have pinnate major veins. The inflorescences are terminal spikes. The flowers are blue or white and produced from July to October. Unlike many mints, there is not a distinct mint odor to the crushed leaves.
25. Sweet Goldenrod (*Solidago odora*) is a perennial in the Asteraceae or sunflower family. The leaves are alternate and simple, and with pinnate major veins. The leaves are dark green and curve downward. The flowers are in heads, and the heads are in terminal tapering upward panicle that is recurved. The heads include small yellow ray flowers and yellow disc flowers. The crushed leaves and flowers have a strong licorice odor and can be dried for tea making. This plant flowers from August to October.
26. Obedient plant (*Physostegia digitalis*) is also called false dragonhead and is a perennial in the Lamiaceae or mint family.. The stems are square in cross-section, and the leaves are opposite, simple, mostly sessile, and have pinnate major veins. The large perfect and irregular flowers are opposite in a terminal spike inflorescence. The flowers vary in color from white to lavender or purple and usually have dark purple spots and are produced in June and July. The name obedient plant comes from the fact that if you move a flower, the flower stays in the place that you move it.
27. Black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia grandiflora*) is a perennial in the Asteraceae or sunflower family. The leaves are alternate, and simple. The flowers are in heads, and the heads are solitary on the branch tips. The heads have yellow ray flowers and dark purple disc flowers. It flowers from June to August. There are two other species of black eyed susan in this prairie; common blackeyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) a smaller plant and Texas blackeyed susan (*Rudbeckia texana*) a larger plant of wetter areas.
28. Hairy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*) Ashy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*) is also known as hairy sunflower, downy sunflower, and soft sunflower. It is a member of the Asteraceae or sunflower family. The plants are perennial from an underground rhizome. The above ground plants are two to three feet tall or rarely taller under garden conditions. The stem and leaves are covered with a grayish blue soft pubescence. The leaves are sessile, opposite, simple, and often point upward in the upper half. The leaves have pinnate major veins, the margins are serrate, and the bases are rounded to slightly cordate. The flowers are typical sunflower type with two kinds of flowers (ray and disc) arranged in a head inflorescence. The heads are scattered along the upper portion of the stem with typically one to five or so heads per stem but can range up to fifteen. The heads are distinctly positioned on the sides of the stem and are almost always perpendicular to the ground. The ray and disc flowers are yellow with the rays rounded to obtuse at the tips. The bracts are lanceolate with the tips acuminate and often reflexed. The bracts are distinctly grayish pubescent and often appear white in the light. The achenes are black and with a rounded to truncate densely pubescent apex. The seeding heads are attractive with a distinct honeycomb look. It begins to flower in June and can last into September.
29. Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum (Cacalia) ovata*) is a perennial in the Asteraceae or sunflower family.. The plants produce distinct basal leaves, and the stem leaves are alternate, simple, and reduced upward. The blade has three to nine nerves that converge at the apex. The heads have white to pink disc flowers only and the heads are arranged in a flat-topped cyme. It flowers from June to October and is usually found in wetter sites.
30. Narrow Leaved Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*) is a perennial in the Lamiaceae or mint family. The stems are square in cross-section and the narrow linear leaves are opposite, simple, and have pinnate major veins. The inflorescences are terminal cymes that are arranged in heads. The flowers are white and are produced from May to August. The crushed leaves have a strong odor as most mints. Two other species of mountain mint are found in the Cajun Prairie; whiteleaf mountainmint (*P. albescens*) and clustered mountain mint (*P. muticum*). Both have wider ovate to lanceolate leaves.