Mimulus ringens

Monkey Flower

Mimulus ringens, also known as Monkey Flower, is a species of flowering plant in the family Phrymaceae native to swamps, wet meadows, pond banks, and low woods throughout the USA. The plant will grow in wet soils in full sun to part shade. Monkey Flower typically grows 1-3' (less frequently to 4') tall on erect, square, sometimes branching stems. The plant features lilac-purple, snapdragon-like flowers 1" long with two-lipped, open-mouthed corollas. Flowers appear in pairs in the leaf axils on slender 1-2" long pedicels. Each flower resembles the face of a smiling monkey lending it the common name. Flowers bloom throughout the summer.

The monkey flower is an important larval host for Baltimore and Common Buckeye butterflies. These lovely butterflies lay their eggs on the foliage, which provides an immediate food source once the caterpillars hatch.

Decodon verticillatus

Swamp Loosestrife

Decodon verticillatus, also known as Swamp Loosestrife, is a species of flowering plant in the family Lythraceae native to moist and wet meadows, swamps and along slow moving streams and ponds in the eastern USA. Swamp Loosestrife is a perennial herbaceous plant with stems that can reach 5.9 feet tall. The leaves are arranged opposite on the stems and are lanceolate in shape with short petioles and entire margins. Its flowers are clustered in the axils of the upper leaves and have 5 reddish purple pedals. Swamp loosestrife has a gently arching habit and forms colonies over time. It should not be confused with another plant that it shares a similar common name. Purple Loosestrife, also known as Lythrum salicaria, has a known reputation as being highly invasive and quick to spread due to its ability to send out roots through a branch tip when the tip is resting on the ground. Unlike Purple Loosestrife, Swamp Loosestrife's colonies are not aggressively invasive.

Hibiscus palustris

Swamp Rose Mallow

Hibiscus palustris, also known as Swamp Rose Mallow, is a species of flowering plant in the family Malvaceae native to wet meadows, wetlands and along the edge of ponds in the eastern USA. Swamp Rose Mallow is a cold-hardy perennial wetland plant that can grow in large colonies. The wildflower is usually 3-7' tall and is largely unbranched with alternate leaves that are 3-8" long and 2-4" across. The leaves are ovate and dentate along their margins. Individual flowers are 4-6" across consisting of white or pink petals that bloom from mid-summer to early fall and lasts about a month. This specimen is commonly planted for its vibrant flowers.

Filipendula rubra

Queen of the Prairie

Filipendula rubra, also known as Queen of the Prairie, is a species of flowering plant in the family Rosaceae native to sun or part sun and moist habitats throughout northeastern and central USA. The large pink puffy flowers typically rise above the surrounding vegetation and can be seen for some distance. The ferny, pointy leaves have a unqiue appearance that stands out from all the other native plants.The plant can grow in either sunlight or partly shady regions. Queen of the Prairie's flowers are very aesthetically pleasing and fragrant, which makes it an attractive plant for growing in gardens.

Native Americans have used the root of Queen of the Prairie in traditional medicine for treating heart problems and as an aphrodisiac. The root has a high tannin content, making it useful as an astringent for treating diarrhea, dysentery, and bleeding.

Iris versicolor

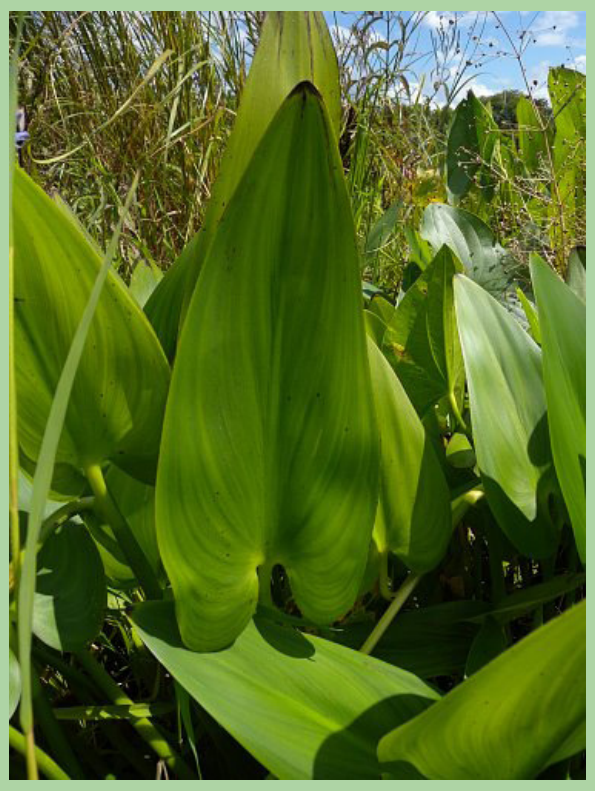
Blue Flag

Iris versicolor, also known as Blue Flag, is a species of flowering plant in the family Iridaceae native to sunny to partly shady and moist habitats throughout eastern USA. As the scientific name implies, it is an iris. Blue Flag can be grown in 2-4" of shallow standing water or in moist soils. In the wild the plant will naturalize to form colonies. This plant forms a clump of narrow, sword-shaped, blue-green leaves which are 24" long and 1" wide. Flowering stalks rise from the clump to 30" tall in late spring with each stalk producing 3-5 bluish-purple flowers 4" wide with bold purple veining. Falls (sepals) have a central yellow blotch surrounded by a white zone. Clumps spread slowly by tough, creeping rhizomes.

Planting Blue Flag has advantages such as low maintenance and observed medicinal uses. The plant root can be used to treat diseases of the liver due to its rich source of iridin and can also improve liver action. It can be used at a blood cleanser and can benefit the lymphatic system as well.

Pontederia cordata

Pickerel Weed

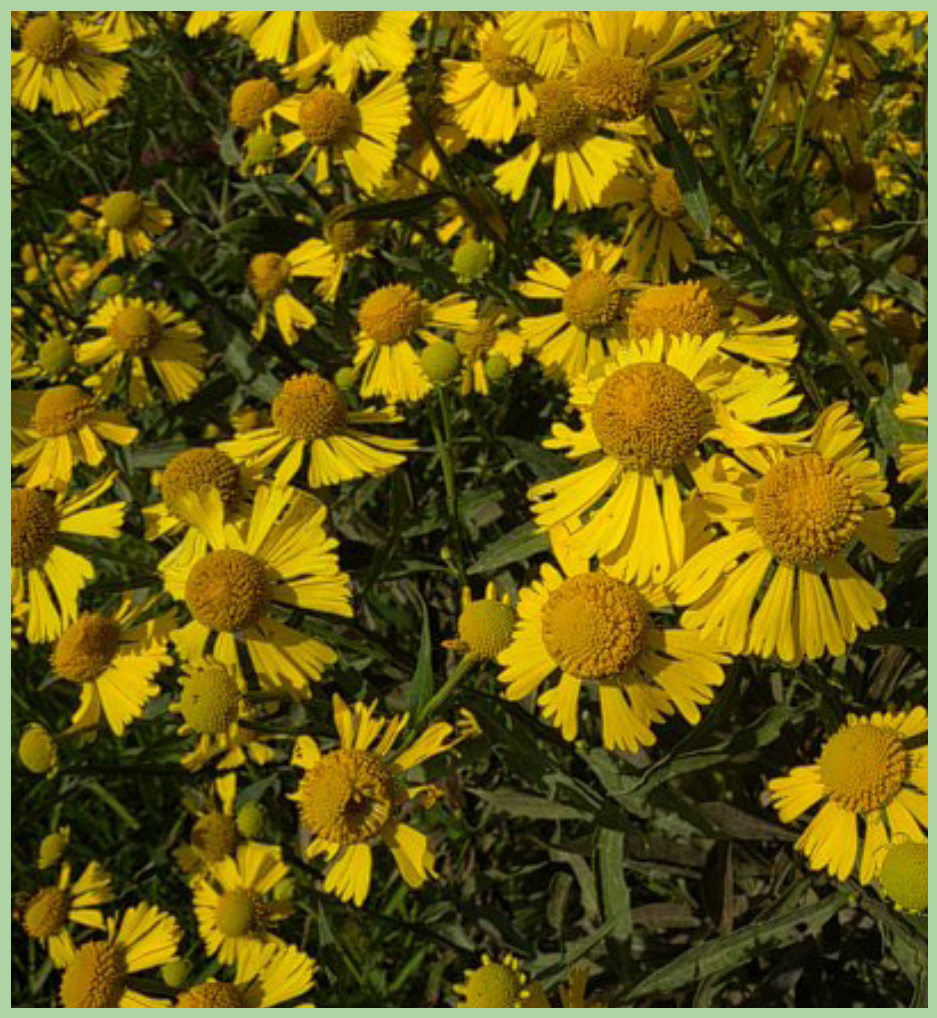


Pontederia cordata, also known as Pickerel Weed, is a species of flowering plant in the family Pontederiaceae native to still water pond margins and open water area within wetlands throughout eastern USA to the Caribbean. The plant grows best in full sunlight as it is required for best flowering. This is a vigorous grower usually 2-4' tall and can spread. Pickerel Weed has glossy, narrow, arrowhead-shaped green leaves 10" long with rounded cordate bases that rise well above the water surface. Tiny, tubular soft blue flowers are densely packed into erect, 3-6" long spikes atop flower stalks typically rising 1-2' above the water surface. Plants flower freely from June to October. Flowers give way to starchy seeds with distinctive toothed ridges. Flower spikes droop after bloom, releasing the distinctive seeds into the water.

The seeds of Pickerel Weed are edible off the plant or can be dried and added to granola cereals. Very young leaves can be used as salad greens. Nectar from this plant is sweet and attracts many insects, including bees and butterflies.

Helenium autumnale

Autumn Sneezeweed



Helenium autumnale, also known as Autumn Sneezeweed, is a species of flowering plant in the family Asteraceae native to moist soils along streams, ponds, wet-meadows and prairies throughout the USA and grows best in full sunlight. Typically grows 3-5' tall on rigid, distinctively winged stems which branch near the top. This plant features clusters of daisy-like flowers 2" diameter with distinctive wedge-shaped, bright yellow rays (three-lobed at the tips) and prominent, dome-like, dull yellow center disks. Flowers appear in late summer and continue into autumn (sometimes to first frost) as indicated by the species common name. It has alternate, lance-shaped, dark green leaves 6" long. Powdered disk flowers and leaves of this species have in the past been dried and used as snuff, thus giving rise to the common name of sneezeweed.

Eupatorium fisulosum

Joe Pye Weed

Eupatorium fisulosum, also known as Joe Pye Weed, is a species of flowering plant in the family Asteraceae native to wooded sloped, wet meadows and stream margins throughout Eastern and Northern USA. The plant grows best in full sunlight as it is required for best flowering, but does tolerate part sun. Joe Pye Weed is an erect, clump-forming perennial which typically grows 4-7' tall and features coarsely-serrated, lance-shaped, dark green leaves 12" long in whorls of 3-4 on sturdy green stems with purplish leaf nodes. Tiny, vanilla-scented, dull pinkish-purple flowers bloom in mid-summer to early fall. Each flower cluster typically has 5-7 florets. Flowers are very attractive to butterflies. The flowers of this plant give way to attractive seed heads which persist well into winter allowing for multi-seasonal color.

Pycnanthemum virginianum

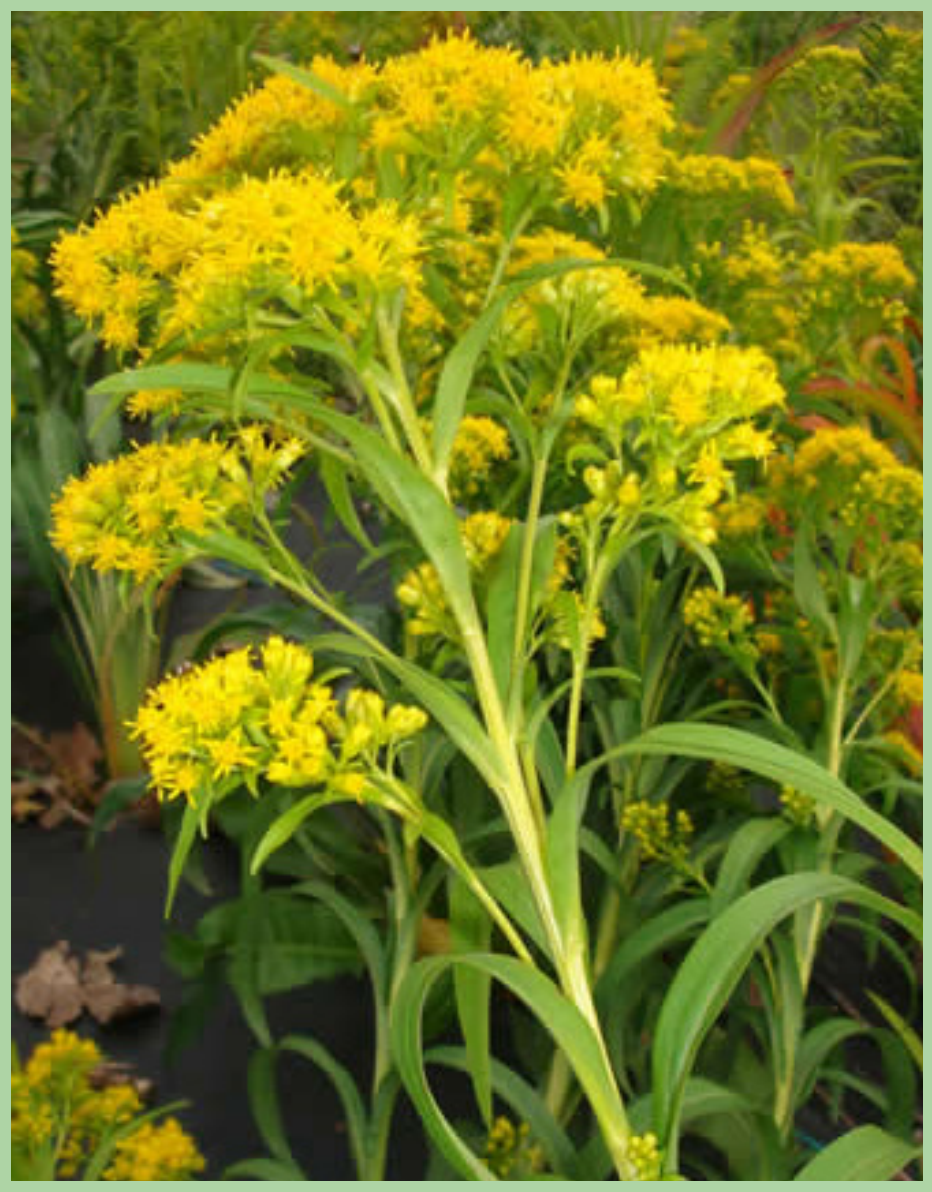
Mountain Mint

Pycnanthemum Virginianum, also known as Mountain Mint, is a species of flowering plant in the family Lamiaceae native to wet meadows, swamps and along streams and ponds in the eastern USA. Mountain Mint is an erect, many-branched, herbaceous perennial that grows 2-3' tall and features narrow, toothless, tapering leaves and profuse clusters of small white, 2-lipped flowers which bloom in mid to late summer. All parts of the plant emit a strong, mint-like aroma when crushed.

The plant leaves can be used for cooking and making tea, that latter which can be used as an alternative medicine treatment of indigestion, oral sores, colic, coughs, colds, chills, and fever. The plant is edible in raw or cooked forms.

Solidago riddellii

Riddell's Goldenrod



Solidago riddellii, also known as Riddell's Goldenrod, is a species of flowering plant in the family Asteraceae native to wet meadows in the northeastern USA and prefers full sun. It has narrow, lance-shaped, linear leaves. Riddell's Goldenrod feature tiny, bright yellow flowers that form in dense, erect, flat-topped inflorescences atop stiff stems typically growing 3-4' tall. Flowers bloom late summer to early autumn. The plant provides good color and contrast in late summer and is very attractive to butterflies and bees.

Rosa palustris

Swamp Rose

Rosa Palustris, also known as Swamp Rose, is a species of deciduous shrub in the family Rosaceae native to wet ground such as swamps, marshes, and stream banks throughout eastern USA. Typically grows 3-6' tall and the same wide. The shrub has reddish stems with curved prickles that are clad with pinnately compound medium to dark green leaves. Each leaf typically has 7 (sometimes 5) broad-elliptic, finely-toothed, dark green leaflets up to 2 1/2" long which are pointed at both ends. Fragrant, single pink roses 2" across with contrasting yellow center stamens bloom from late spring to early summer (June- July). Flowers are followed by pea-sized red hips that are 1/2" long. Its leaves turn often attractive shades of red in autumn and fall to the ground during winter.

Shallow Emergent Community

Shallow emergent marshes occur in broad, flat areas bordering low-energy rivers and streams, often in backwater areas, or along pond and lake margins. The soils are a mixture of organic and mineral components. There is typically a layer of well-decomposed organic muck at the surface overlying mineral soil. Standing or running water occur during the growing season and throughout much of the year and water depth is usually less than 6". Vegetation composition is usually shorter grasses, sedges and rushes. Floating leaved plants, such as water-lilies and submergents, like pondweeds, occur in open areas. Duckweed is abundant in areas of still water. Shallow emergent communities differ from wet meadows by occurring in different physical setting and hydrological regimes.

Shallow emergent areas are threatened by filling and dredging which are impoundments that alter natural water-level fluctuations and from heavy nutrient input from adjacent roads, stormwater sewer outfalls, fields and septic systems.

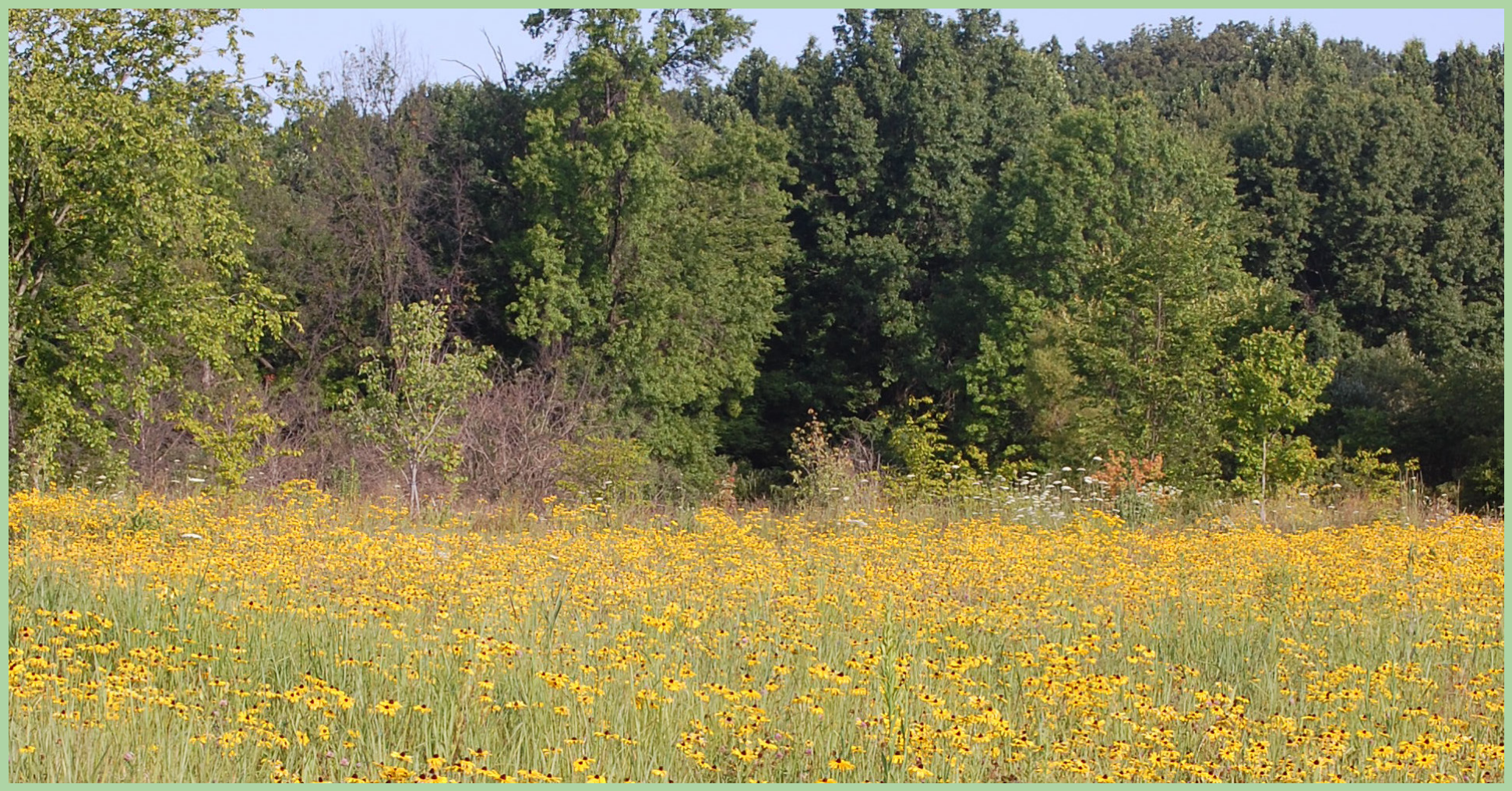
Deep Emergent Community

Deep emergent plant communities have standing water depths of between 6" and 3' or more during the growing season. Herbaceous emergent, floating, floating-leaved and submergent vegetation compose this community, with the major dominance by cattails, bulrushes, pickerelweed, giant bur-reed, common reed, wild rice, pondweeds and/or water-lilies.

Sedge Meadow Community

Sedge meadows are dominated by the sedges (Carex) growing on saturated soils. Soils are usually composed of peat or muck. Common settings for this community are relatively stagnant headwater basins, hydrologically isolated lobes of larger drainage marshes, and behind abandoned beaver dams. Sedge meadows often drain into shallow marshes, calcareous fens, wet prairies, and bogs. Occasional fires stimulate spring growth of the sedges while setting back invading woody vegetation.

Short Grass Prairie



A short grass prairie is a permanent grassland with few or no woody plants and as such are dominated by grasses such as buffalo grass, little bluestem and blue grama. Typically, grass species comprise around 90% of the total plant biomass even though they represent about 10% of the prairie plant species. The low precipitation in the short grass prairie, in conjunction with grazing, causes most short-grass vegetation to rarely exceed 12-24 inches in height. Over the last 100 years, approximately 50% of the historic short grass prairie has been converted for uses other than rangeland. Tall grass prairies are native to Ohio, while short grass prairies are not native, they were placed here because of their typical short stature compared to the tall grass prairie's 8' or more in height.

Aquatic Community

Aquatic communities are small bodies of freshwater such as ponds with shallow and still water, marsh, and aquatic plants. They can be further divided into four zones: vegetation zone, open water, bottom mud and surface film. The size and depth of an aquatic community often varies greatly with the time of year; many areas are produced by spring flooding from rivers. Food webs are based both on free-floating algae and upon aquatic plants. There is usually a diverse array of aquatic life, with a few examples including algae, snails, fish, beetles, water bugs, frogs, turtles, otters and muskrats. Top predators may include large fish and herons. Since fish are a major predator upon amphibian larvae, aquatic communities that dry up each year, thereby killing resident fish, provide important refuge for amphibian breeding. These areas that dry up completely each year are often known as vernal pools.