



Big bluestem along the trail

The Rockefeller Prairie Trail

Prior to the 1850s, approximately 95 percent of northeastern Kansas was prairie. Only about 1 percent remains. The Rockefeller Prairie Trail first travels through restored prairie then follows the edge of the 10-acre Rockefeller Native Prairie, a surviving unplowed prairie remnant. This jewel of biodiversity contains more than 200 species of native plants. While grasses—including big bluestem, Indian grass and switchgrass—are the most abundant species, this guide provides information on a sample of the prairie's outstanding fall-flowering plants.

For more information:
biosurvey.ku.edu/field-station



Fall tour at the Rockefeller Native Prairie

The Rockefeller Prairie Trail is maintained by the University of Kansas Field Station. Our mission is to foster scholarly research, environmental education and science-based stewardship of natural resources.

Use this guide to learn more about native plants you see along the trail.



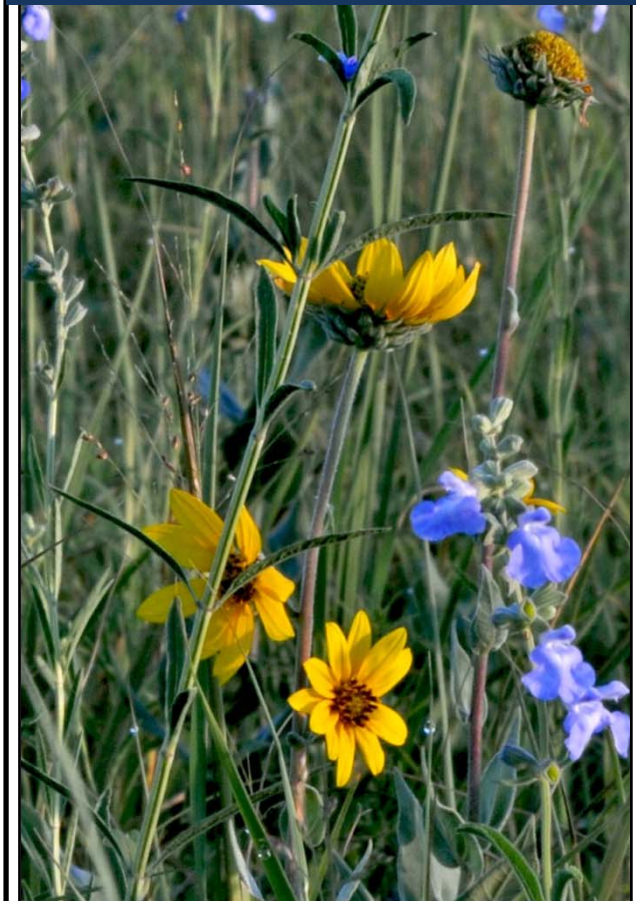
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Rockefeller Prairie Trail Field guide to autumn-flowering plants



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Compass plant

Silphium laciniatum (Asteraceae)

This plant is native to the central U.S. and parts of Canada. Its one-seeded fruits fall to the ground nearby, often creating colonies of plants. The leaves of this unusual plant tend to grow with their edges pointing north and south and their faces oriented east and west. This adaptation keeps the plant from drying out during the hottest parts of the day and minimizes water loss during photosynthesis.



Tall blazing star

Liatrix aspera (Asteraceae)

Tall blazing star is found throughout the eastern U.S. and into Ontario. Its long, tubular florets require long-tongued pollinators. In South Dakota in 1804, Lewis and Clark collected a specimen of *L. aspera*, now held at the Smithsonian.

All photos: Kansas Biological Survey



Rattlesnake master

Eryngium yuccifolium (Apiaceae)

This plant is distributed throughout most of the eastern half of the U.S. Native Americans used its roots for various medicinal purposes, including snake bite, and its fibrous, yucca-like leaves to make cordage.



Blue sage

Salvia azurea (Lamiaceae)

Blue sage is found throughout the eastern U.S. and west to Colorado. It is a member of the mint family and is pollinated primarily by larger bees. Notably drought- and disease-resistant, and attractive to hummingbirds, it is a common ornamental addition to home gardens.



Gray sunflower (ashy sunflower)

Helianthus mollis (Asteraceae)

The gray sunflower is common to large portions of the eastern U.S. It gets its common name from small grayish hairs on its foliage. In sunflowers and their relatives, flower heads bear strap-like ray florets around the edge and many tubular disk florets in the center. This plant grows in colonies and is a favorite of white-tailed deer.



Canada goldenrod

Solidago canadensis (Asteraceae)

This sturdy member of the sunflower family ranges across much of North America. It is often found next to ragweed and mistaken for an allergen. It is commonly grazed and also serves an important source of nectar for honeybees. All above-ground parts can be used to make yellow dye.