

Chiwaukee Flowers for your garden

The Chiwaukee Prairie Preservation Fund was formed 30 years ago as a non-profit organization to protect and preserve the prairie. In honor of this 30 year anniversary I have picked 30 flowering plants of the prairie that can be part of a garden landscape. Most are easily grown from plants (some can be grown successfully from seed) and are non-aggressive, that is, they will not grow out of control. (*Note, do not any plants from protected lands. There are a number of native plant nurseries that can be found locally or watch for a native plant sale near you.*)

Six flowers that may be seen on the prairie in June that I have chosen to spotlight this month are coreopsis, blue flag iris, butterfly milkweed, spiderwort, flowering spurge, and phlox.

There are two kinds of golden yellow coreopsis, sand coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*), which grows best in full sun and sandy soil, and prairie coreopsis (*Coreopsis palmata*) that grows in medium moisture soils and sun or partial shade. Blue flag (*Iris virginica*) loves to have its feet wet so, if you have a wet spot or even a ditch that fills when it rains and has full or part sun, plant iris and enjoy the lavender flowers in May and June. Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) is a bright orange cluster of flowers that likes sun or part shade and tolerates normal to dry soil moisture. This is a Monarch butterfly friendly plant and forms smooth skinny seed pods. Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*) is a lovely blue flower that grows in a tight cluster and only 1 or 2 flowers open daily so the blossoming go on for several weeks. This plant grows in dry to moist soil and in full sun or open woods. Flowering spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*) is a Wisconsin native spurge and has five bright white petals in an umbrella shaped cluster. The oblong leaves have a yellowish-green or pale blue cast and turn red in autumn. Phlox also has two representatives on the prairie, smooth phlox (*Phlox glaberrima*) which is endangered in Wisconsin and only grows in Racine and Kenosha counties, and downy phlox (*Phlox pilosa*). Downy phlox is fairly common in Wisconsin and at Chiwaukee this phlox is 8-15 inches tall and the whole plant is covered with very fine hairs, giving it a “downy” appearance. Downy phlox blooms late May-June and likes mid to dry soils. Smooth phlox grows in calcareous fens or damp meadows, blooms later and longer, is very smooth all over with no hairs, and at Chiwaukee grows 15-30 inches tall. Both plants have a cluster of pink five petal flowers and are very showy. I will be giving prairie tours this summer to show these flowers and tell more about the prairie.

For more information go to www.chiwaukee.org

Kay McClelland

CPPF Board Member, on the Stewardship Committee, specialty: plants of concern

BS in Art Education

Studied prairie plants for the last 20 years, mostly at Chiwaukee