

Prairie Exploration

at the Prairie Learning Center (PLC)

POLLINATOR WALK Using the Prairie Pollinators & other Insects Guide, identify insects on a prairie hike. Pollinators are gentle but give them space so they can go about their important work. Also look for prairie spiders, snakes and birds.

ARTIST'S DELIGHT Bring paints and pencils to create artwork! Prairie insects and plants exhibit a full spectrum of color and unique shapes.

The very interesting Virginia Ctenucha Moth on milkweed.

PRAIRIE PLANT WALK Using the Forbs & Grasses Guide, identify plants on a hike. Touch plant leaves and stems to note different textures: dry and rough, soft and hairy, shiny smooth, or a combination of textures on the same plant. Try to identify a plant not in bloom.

A PRAIRIE MOMENT With a quiet approach, feeding pollinators can be easily photographed or videotaped. Also, try capturing a prairie landscape of swaying grasses or interesting summer clouds.

GARDENING CATALOG Take plant photos of species to use in your home garden. Use a plant ID app, prairie guidebook, or contact the Friends Naturalist for ID assistance. Native plants aid pollinators and wildlife everywhere they are found! See all the benefits in the next column.

THE SCENTED PRAIRIE Find the many scented flowers and leaves!

Lavender Hyssop's leaves smell like anise.

STORYWALK® TRAIL Pages from a nature-themed children's book are placed alongside a prairie trail near the Heritage Center. Check out other fun and educational in-person children's programs from the Lussier Family Heritage Center.*

MONARCH COUNT The PLC is a Monarch Waystation, which means it provides milkweeds, nectar plants, and shelter for monarchs throughout their cycle of reproduction and migration. Gently look on milkweed plants for caterpillars (also called *larvae*, see photo). Five different types of *Asclepias* plants – the milkweeds – grow at the PLC.

STEWARDSHIP Join volunteers on our many prairie service days! No gardening skills needed.*

CITIZEN SCIENCE: BUMBLE BEE SURVEYS Join a Friends survey to support state-wide conservation.* No prior knowledge is needed, just a curiosity for these fuzzy, busy pollinators.

PRAIRIE & MARSH TRAIL GUIDE WALK Starting behind the Heritage Center, take a walk using the Friends educational trail guide with posted stops along the way.

FRIENDS PLANT ID MARKERS Look for these markers (photo at right) on prairie trails in the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way and W.G. Lunney Lake Farm County Park.

FRIENDS NATURALIST-LED WALKS Prairie walks and other nature-focused events are scheduled throughout the year for all ages.*

THE DYNAMIC PRAIRIE Come back again! From spring to fall, new plants come to bloom, different pollinators emerge, and birds arrive for fall seed and shelter.

WHAT ARE NATIVE PLANTS?

Native plants are plants that are indigenous to a place; that is, they were growing in a specific location prior to Euro-American settlement. Native plants evolved over thousands of years to adapt to local climate conditions and soils, and, crucially, they evolved alongside animal populations.

Non-native plants do not possess these deep-rooted, locally-adapted traits and therefore do not contribute to natural, local food webs in abundance. If aggressive, non-native plants can also invade and take over diverse, balanced natural plant communities, decreasing biodiversity.

Gardening with Native Prairie Plants

The benefits of gardening with native plants go beyond many years of beauty in a landscape. Using native plants in gardens of any size also provide ecological benefits connected to healthy water and soil, food production, and biodiversity.

PLANT SUSTAINABILITY, RESILIENCE Native plants are adapted to our local climate. Once established, they are resilient to weather fluctuations, including hot and dry weather. Native plants need infrequent watering, saving water resources (and your time).

NO-FERTILIZER GARDENING Because native plants are adapted to local soil types, they require no fertilizer; in fact, fertilizer can do long-term harm. Unlike lawn or ornamental plants, prairie over time creates its own fertilizer, enriching the soil.

WATER & SOIL SERVICES Deep root systems – up to 15' – absorb and filter rainwater, reducing runoff into lakes and streams. Spreading roots hold soil in place, reducing erosion.

HELPING WI POLLINATORS Wisconsin pollinators need native plants, including trees and shrubs, for survival. Bees, butterflies, moths, wasps, flies, and ants (our pollinators) require native plants for food, shelter and for their individual life cycles.

POLLINATORS FEED US One out of three bites we eat is provided by pollinators, which is about 35% of our food, along with medicines, fibers, and beverages. Bees are excellent pollinators, and Wisconsin is home to about 500 native bee species. Most surpass the non-native honeybee in pollinating plants, including crops.

POLLINATORS & NATIVE PLANTS SUSTAIN EARTH'S BIODIVERSITY Over 80% of the world's flowering plants require pollinators, so pollinators play a key role in supporting plant communities. These plant communities then produce the seeds, nuts, and berries that support wildlife food webs. Pollinator caterpillars also directly feed animals, particularly birds. Together, native plants and pollinators aid biodiversity everywhere they are found.

HUMAN-TO-NATURE INTERACTION Native plant gardening provides everyday nature discovery and experiences: dazzling color displays, interesting textures and shapes, pollinators of every design, visiting migratory songbirds, and sheltering winter critters. It's the best show in town!

Want to get started? Check out three demonstration prairie gardens and prairie restoration areas here at the Heritage Center to see native prairie plants firsthand. Get to know the soil, moisture retention level, and sun exposure of your garden. Go online or visit a native plant nursery for gardening tips and planting information.



The PLC at the Heritage Center is a designated Monarch Waystation.

Yellow Bumble Bee

Green Sweat Bee

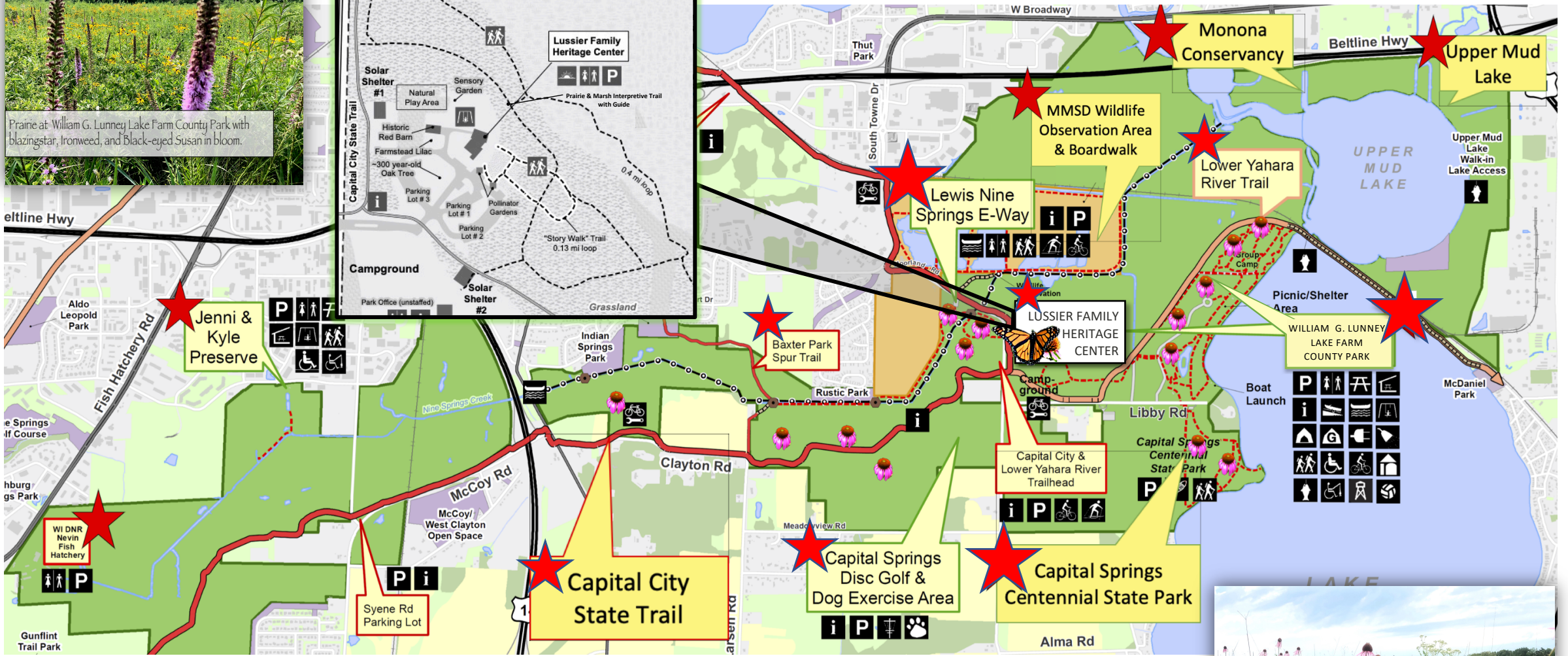
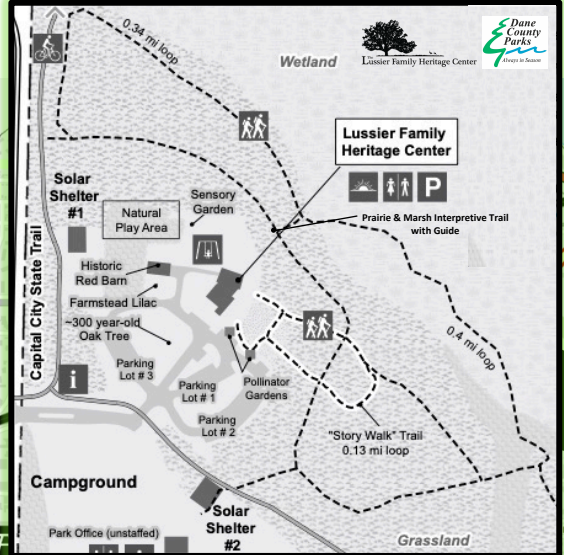





PRAIRIE LEARNING CENTER MAP

Developed by the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area and made possible by a grant from the Foundation for Dane County Parks
 Find the Friends: www.friendsofcapitalsprings.org | capssprings@gmail.com | Facebook



Prairie at William G. Lunney Lake Farm County Park with blazingstar, ironweed, and Black-eyed Susan in bloom.



-  Units & Recreational Amenities, Capital Springs Recreation Area
-  Prairies of the Prairie Learning Center, Capital Springs Recreation Area
-  Headquarters of the Learning Prairie Center
 prairie stewardship | pollinator & sensory gardens | citizen science opportunities | plant & pollinator guides | naturalist-led walks* | children's StoryWalk® & in-person children's events* | Monarch Waystation | prairie & marsh trail guide walk

* See www.lussierheritagecenter.com and www.friendsofcapitalsprings.org for event and program schedules.

PLC PARTERS

CARLSON BLACK

WILLIAM G. LUNNEY & JUDIE PEFFER FAMILY FUND FOR PARKS



Drumlin prairie at the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way with Pale Purple Coneflower in bloom.