

PRAIRIE GARDEN TRUST

Henry Domke, 2017

540 acres Callaway Co. DeLorme 38, E-3

GPS: 38.7399399,-92.0425621

<http://www.prairiegardentrust.org>

Address for GPS navigation: 8945 County Road 431 New Bloomfield, MO 65063

NOTE: Privately owned; public access April-November **by reservation only.**

To schedule a visit call (573) 295-4220 or email visit@prairiegardentrust.org.

Make reservations ideally at least one day in advance. Visitors are welcome to stroll around and enjoy the seasonal highlights. A large map on the PGT porch shows the area, and a map brochure highlights the paved and natural trails visitors can walk.

Directions: From Jefferson City, go north on US 54 about 16.5 miles to Rt. BB (4.6 miles north of New Bloomfield). Go right onto Rt. BB for 1.9 miles, then right onto CR 430 and follow it for .6 mile. Turn left onto CR 431 and go .3 mile to the paved parking area.

From Fulton, at US 54, Rt. F interchange, go south on US 54 approximately 6 miles. Exit left on Rt. BB and follow it south 1.9 miles to CR 430. CR 430 is on the right, just as Rt. BB makes a sharp turn left. Take CR 430 south. In about ½ mile, CR 430 turns right (west). Turn left onto CR 431 and follow it about 1/3 mile to the Prairie Garden Trust paved parking lot.

ADA Information: Paved walkways lead to Lotus Ponds and Beaver Lake (see below). Other sites are accessed via mown trails or paths of varying degree of slope and rockiness. Fully accessible restrooms are located at the visitor center.

What to expect: Prairie Garden Trust is a carefully managed nature garden of natural and recreated habitats free of exotic invasive plants. The trails form a network through or along woods with large old trees, savanna, prairie, creek bottom, and ponds to lead birders to an excellent variety of resident and migrating bird species taking advantage of the rich variety of native habitats.

The rich range of species seen here includes an excellent mix of vireos and wood warblers, Sedge Wren, grosbeaks, and Henslow's and LeConte's Sparrows.



Prairie Garden Trust Visitor Center

The PGT visitor center offers a place to pause and see what's blooming in the nearby gardens before you stroll farther afield. You can picnic on the porch or get your bearings with a large map of the area. Small groups are welcome to schedule meetings in the 30' x 18' gathering room. WIFI is available. Restrooms are wheelchair-accessible.



Beaver Lake A 5 minute walk (.14 mile) east from the PGT center through open woods on a paved walk brings you to Beaver lake, nestled in a field of prairie grasses and flowers. Beginning in spring, phlox and bloodroot bloom in the woods and blue false indigo and butterfly weed in the prairie. In summer, masses of prairie blazing star color the field purple, and purple coneflowers bloom in the woods. Water lilies cover the lake. Bald cypress and their knobby "knees" edge the shore.



Lotus Ponds



A 7-minute, .21-mile walk from the visitor center on a paved trail, Lotus Ponds have a bench and stone platform. Imagine yourself in the lowlands of southeast Missouri, where the exotic-looking white flowers of American lotus and water lilies bloom. That's what you find in the Lotus Ponds, along with cattails, corkwood, occasional ducks, herons, turtles and frogs. A viewing platform gives a higher place to pause and look over the lotus to the prairie beyond.

Indigo Prairie

A mowed trail south of the visitor center meanders past native grasses and flowers and into the edge of woods of oak, maple, hickory, and dogwood. Indigo Prairie is a 7-minute, .2 mile walk. Since 1986, over 50 types of grasses and flowers were planted to convert an old fescue field into prairie. Controlled fires keep trees from invading. In early spring, Indian paintbrush carpets patches of the prairie, followed by the yellow of coneflowers and purple of blazing star. In warm weather the Indian grass, big bluestem and other native grasses come to life.



West Lake



West Lake is a 7-minute (.2 mile) walk along a mowed trail winding northwest downhill from the visitor center. It's a small pond surrounded by rocky, wooded slopes. An aquatic plant called "duck potato" or "arrowhead" thrives here. Birds on or near the pond may include Wood Duck, mergansers, or a Belted Kingfisher.

The Savanna



On the upland above Hillers Creek, The Savanna (.36 mile from the visitor center on a mowed trail) is an area of oak and hickory scattered in an area of grass and sedge. It's a transition between prairie and woods. Historically, Missouri was about a third savanna kept semi-open by the fires of Native Americans. Along the edge of The Savanna, fragile

moss and lichen cover the rocky bluff tops. Sandstone just under the surface creates a thin, acid soil that supports flowers such as birds-foot violet and wood betony that bloom in spring. The Valley Overlook is a special platform that protects the plants on the bluff edge but gives you a sweeping view across the Ozark-like landscape below. A bench makes it a pleasant place to pause

Hillers Creek Trail

This is a .83-mile walk from the visitor center along a mowed and rocky trail with an overlook platform and bench under a roof. Hillers Creek flows past moss and fern-covered bluffs and lush bottomland woods. It swells over its banks in heavy spring rain and settles in scattered pools and long gravel stretches in late summer. It periodically reveals an underlying coral reef that formed here 360 million years ago when warm shallow seas covered the area.

It's home to pawpaw, sycamore, redbud and butternut trees. Blue-eyed Mary flowers carpet the bottomland in April. Great blue herons nest nearby. Though it's just about a 25-minute walk, Hillers Creek feels like a world away.

The Point (along Hillers Creek Trail)



A high bluff ridge stands like a peninsula where Hillers Creek winds around it far below. The Point is the end of that sandstone-capped ridge, a half-mile, 15-minute walk along Hillers Creek Trail from the visitor center. The Point is the highest point on the rocky trail, 80 feet above the creek. Be sure to listen for Worm-eating Warblers here.



From The Point a natural trail descends to the creek. Lichens, mosses, cream wild indigo, lowbush blueberry, and blackjack oak grow on top. Yellow lady slipper blooms on the slope. Native Americans used the area more than 1,000 years ago. You know you're in the foothills of the Ozarks when you look out over hills and to the forest and creek below.

Pawpaw Cliff Vista (along Hillers Creek Trail)



Bluffs tower over the creek as pawpaw trees line the path on the other side. The Devonian coral reef is a little further down the creek southeast of here.



Creek Overlook (along Hillers Creek Trail)



A rocky path leads up from the coral reef in Hillers Creek to a platform with a roof-covered bench. It's a perfect place to relax and enjoy the sights.

From here, you can go down to Butternut Bottom or take the mowed trail uphill to return to the visitor center.

Butternut Bottom (off Hillers Creek Trail)



A footpath from the Creek Overlook leads down to the Butternut Bottom Loop Trail, where pawpaw and butternut trees grow. The trail follows the creek, then loops back under the bluff below The Point. Native Americans used rock shelters here about 1500 years ago.

Hazards/Limitations: None noted other than rocky footing near Hillers Creek.

Nearby Birding Sites: Reform CA*, Earthquake Hollow CA, Little Dixie Lake CA*. Whetstone Creek CA*, Stinson Creek Trail (Fulton).

*Indicates Birders' Guide available when this guide was written. See <http://www.mobirds.org/Locations/SiteGuides.aspx> for these and additional guides.