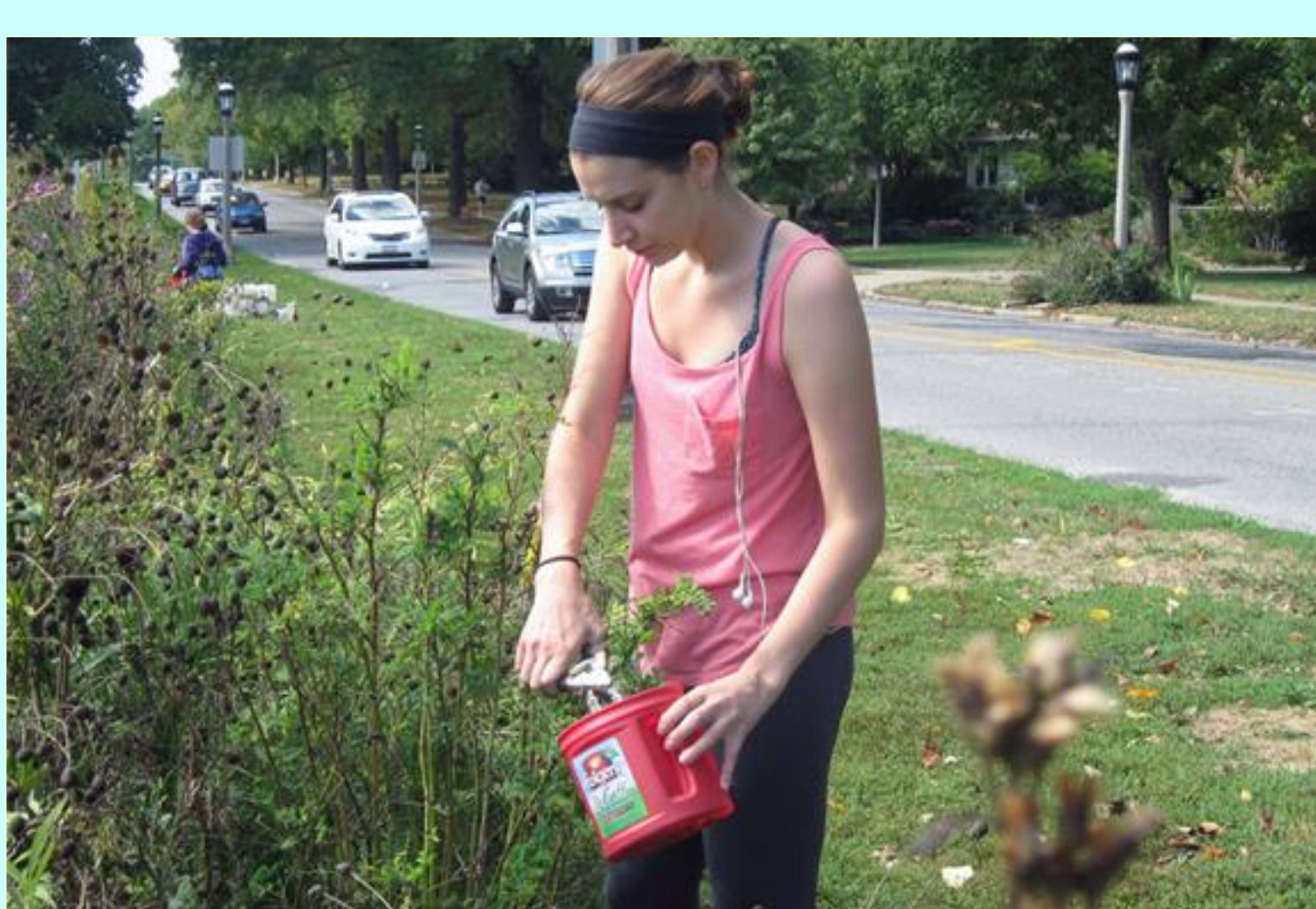


A Year of Progress at the Florida-Orchard Prairie



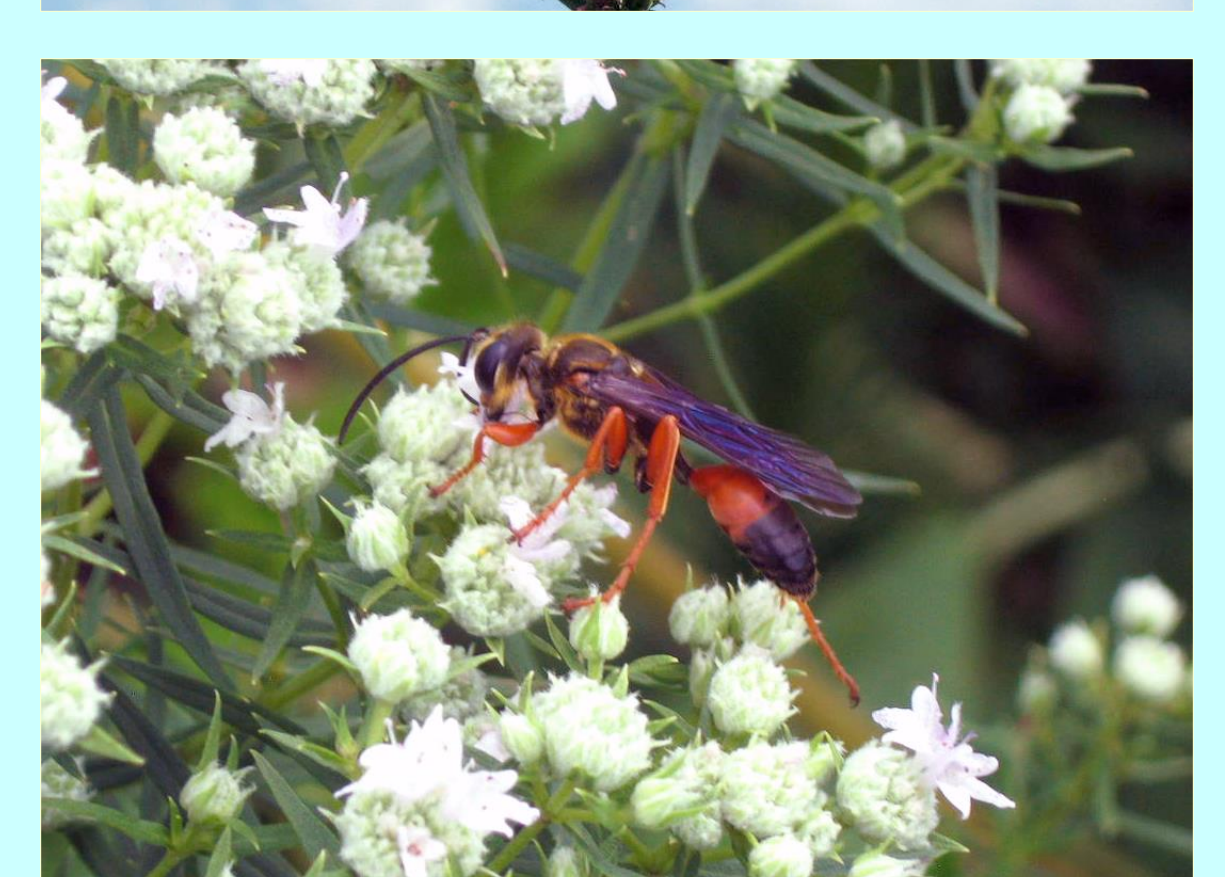
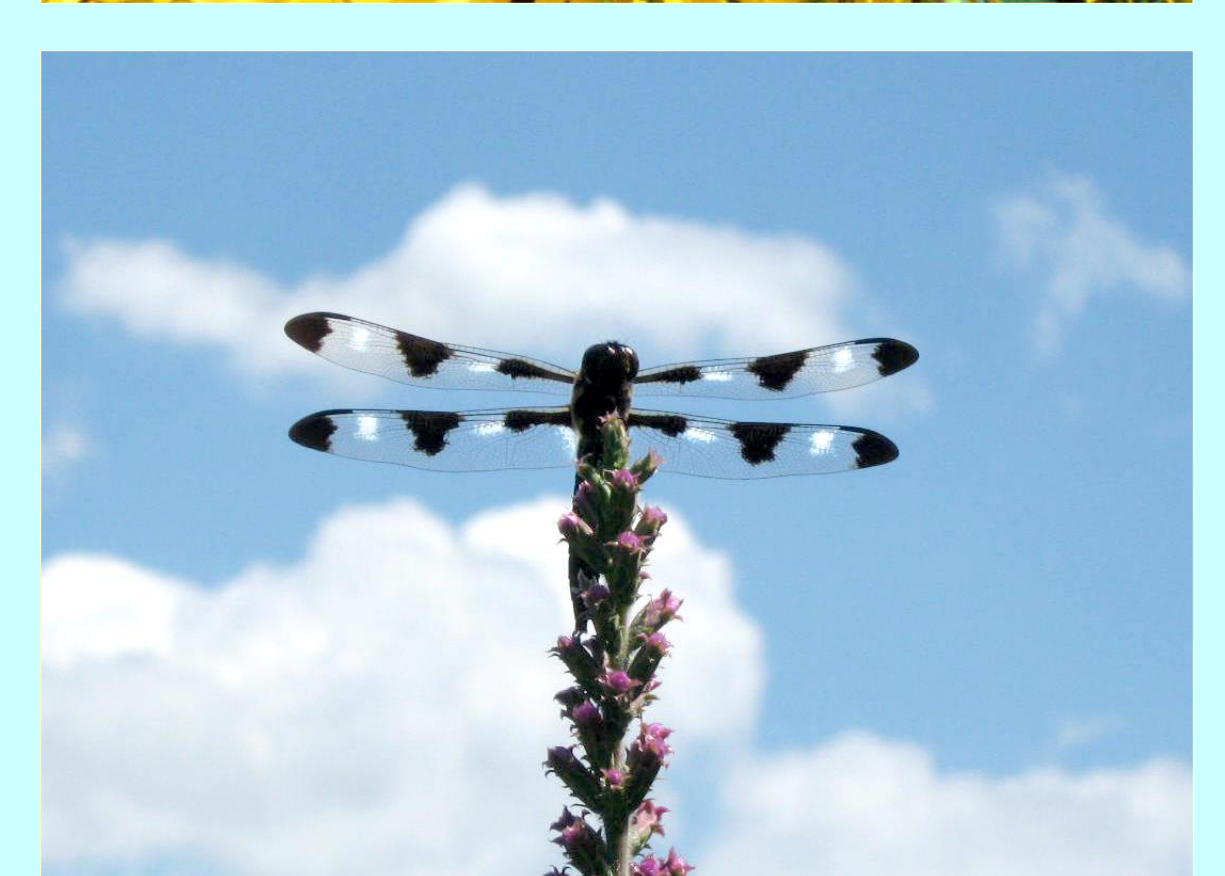
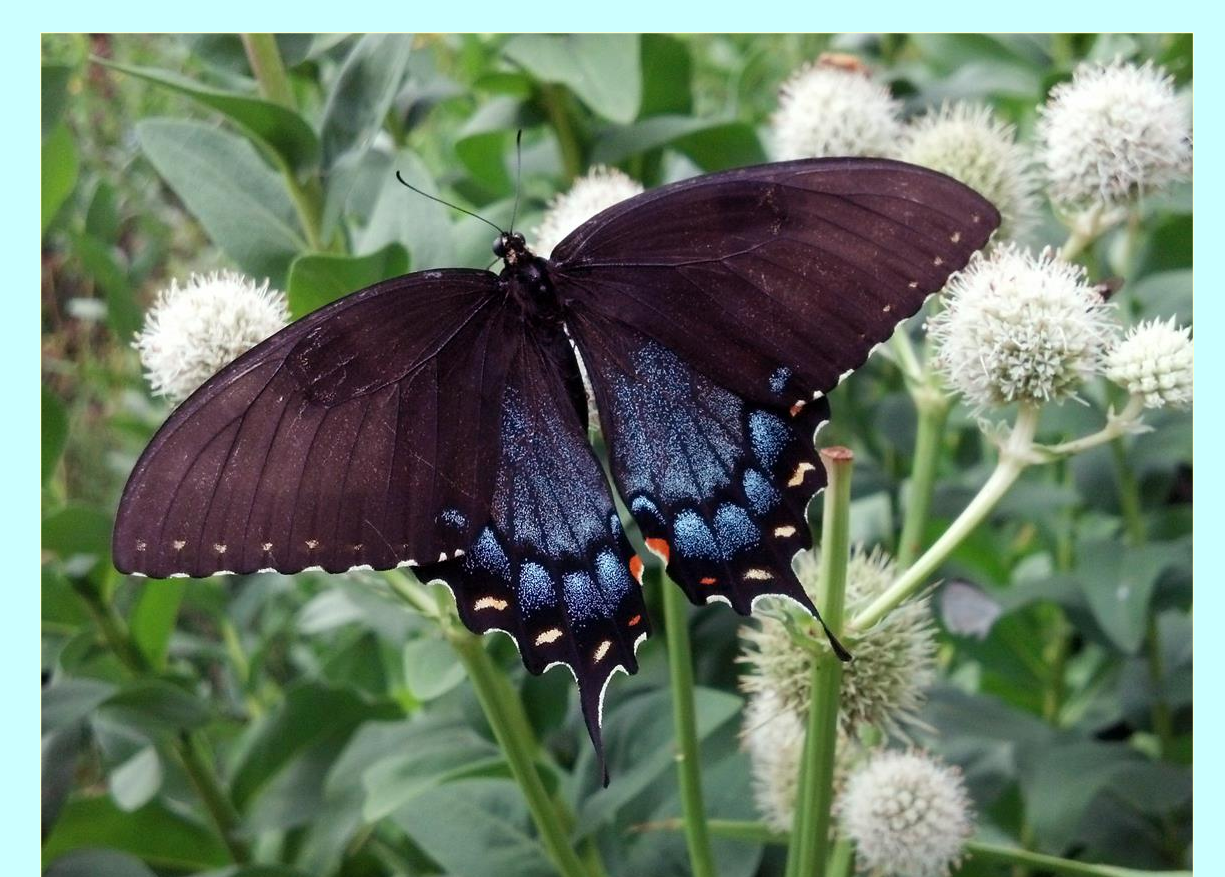
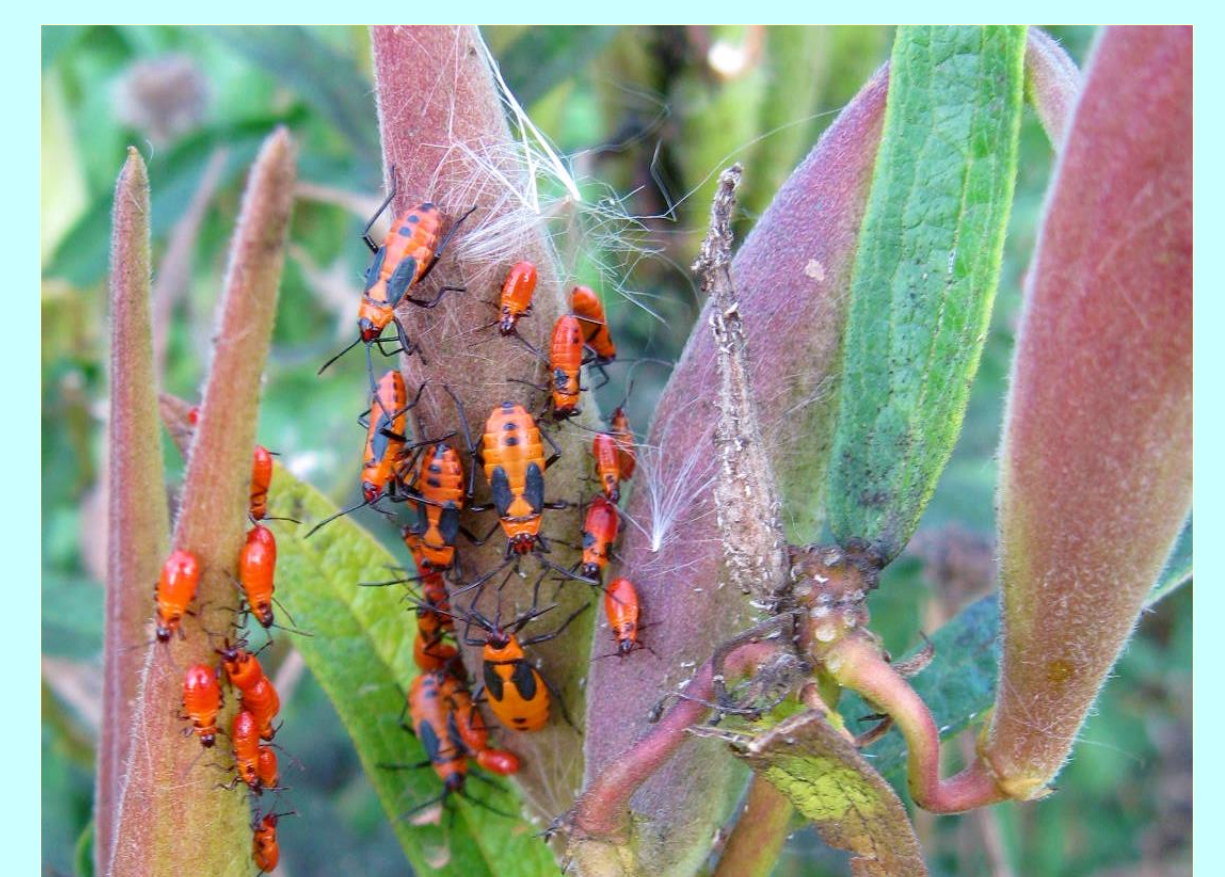
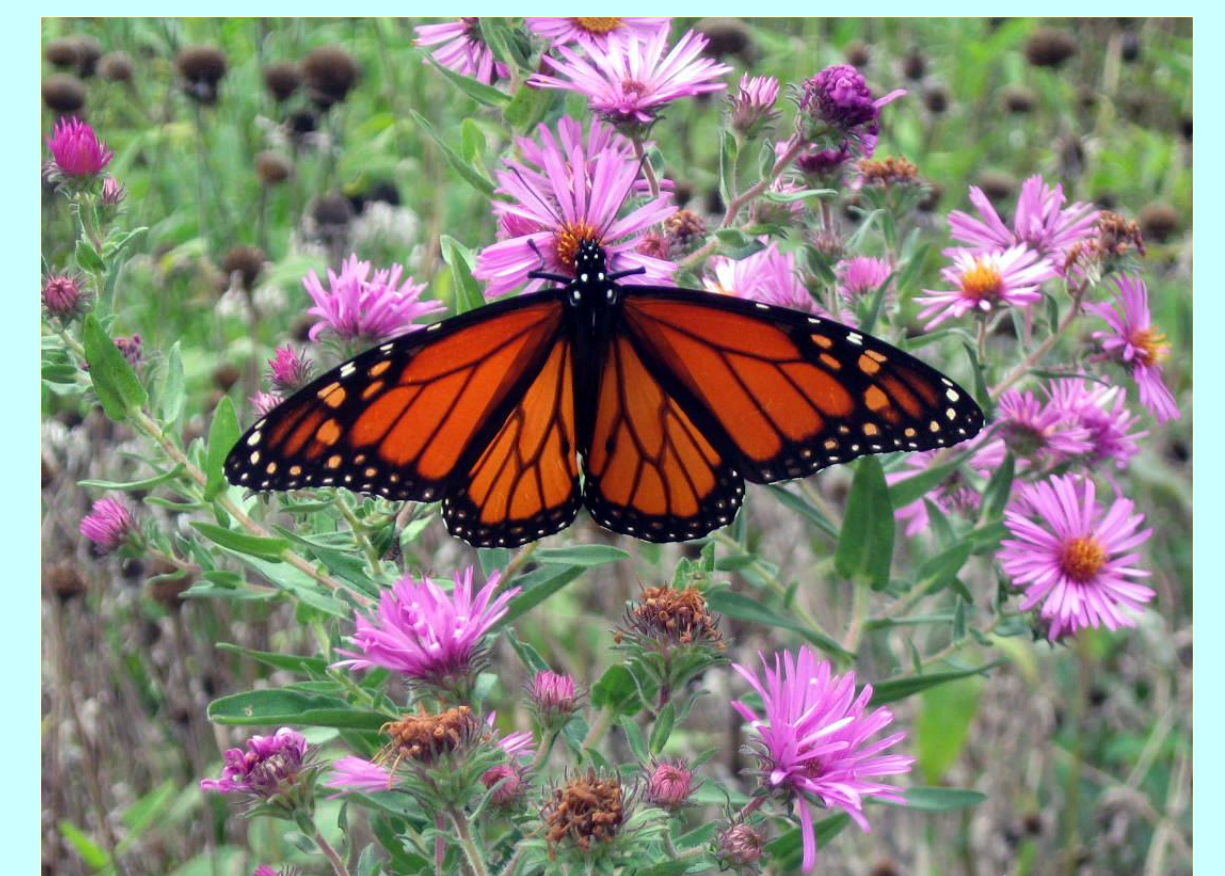
By John C. Marlin, Prairie Research Institute, and Lindsay Donovan, NRES



The prairie at Florida and Orchard streets in Urbana underwent a transformation over the 2013 growing season. Last spring it was dominated by dandelions and other weeds. As the season progressed, *Penstemon*, *Monarda*, *Echinacea*, *Ratibida* and other prairie plants transformed the field into a sea of white, purple and yellow blossoms. These were replaced in the fall by blooms of *Solidago*, *Verbena* and *Aster*. The plants became dormant and provided cover for the field's inhabitants.

Over the course of the season, student workers and volunteers from campus and the community devoted hundreds of hours to the project. In the spring seedlings were planted and mulched in selected areas and occasionally watered. Truckloads of invasive weeds were removed and patches of quack grass were sprayed by Facilities and Services. As fall approached seeds were collected for planting over the winter.

Over 30 species of prairie forbs are in the field. They bloom at different times over the season providing pollen, nectar and other resources to many species. This is an important consideration because many species of insects are active only in the spring or fall while others, like honey bees, are active throughout the growing season. The prairie attracted insects including many pollinators and beneficial predators. A variety of birds and small mammals, including a fox, visited the site.



The Prairie Research Institute would like to acknowledge the work of dozens of individuals from the University and local communities, and the following organizations for helping with the prairie in a variety of capacities: Red Bison and Students for Environmental Concerns (SECS), which are programs of the University YMCA; East Central Illinois Master Naturalists; Grand Prairie Friends; the Pizzo group; U of I Facilities and Services; and the Student Sustainability Committee (SSC). The SSC grant also provided plants for other locations including woodland species at the NRB, Burrill Hall, and Allerton Park. John C. Marlin coordinates the project.