

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and
Social Sciences

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Spring 2011

Review of *The Tallgrass Prairie Center Guide to Seed
and Seedling Identification in the Upper Midwest*. By
Dave Williams.

H. L. Hillhouse

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, hhillhouse3@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Botany Commons](#), [Plant Breeding and Genetics Commons](#), and the [Weed Science Commons](#)

Hillhouse, H. L., "Review of *The Tallgrass Prairie Center Guide to Seed and Seedling Identification in the Upper Midwest*. By Dave Williams." (2011). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 1176.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsresearch/1176>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

The Tallgrass Prairie Center Guide to Seed and Seedling Identification in the Upper Midwest. By Dave Williams. Iowa City: Published for the Tallgrass Prairie Center by the University of Iowa Press, 2010. x + 118 pp. Map, photographs, drawings, glossary, index. \$14.00 paper.

Individuals doing tallgrass prairie plantings and restorations often struggle to identify seedlings because most identification resources require the presence of flowers. Anyone who has spent much time working with plants, however, knows that seedlings can often be identified if you have the experience to spot identifying characteristics. What has been lacking is a resource that organizes and presents these characteristics in an easy-to-use format, allowing identification of seedlings by individuals lacking extensive experience. This is that resource.

This book will please both practitioners of prairie restoration and more general prairie enthusiasts. It includes 72 grass and forb species, and the focus is clearly on species often found in tallgrass prairie plantings in the upper Midwest. The grasses and forbs are presented separately here, and for each group a morphological key is provided to divide the species into “Key Characteristic Groups.” Because these groups are based on morphological similarity, species within a group are often—but not always—closely related.

To facilitate broad use, the author has kept jargon to a minimum. When specific terms are necessary, they are defined in the brief glossary and either illustrated or clearly displayed in the photographs associated with each species. The result is a clear, easy-to-follow identification guide.

Information on each species includes three to four photographs showing the seedling as a whole, closeups of the leaf, stem, or both (or sheath, for grasses), and the seed. Seed photographs were taken on a ruler to show size, and sometimes include more than one seed in order to display the seed itself and the seed with the hull or pappus intact.

In addition, each entry includes a bullet-pointed list of identifying characteristics, a written description of seedling emergence and early development, a list of similar species highlighting key differences, and a description of germination and growth patterns. However, one of the book's few shortcomings is its only occasional information on how seedling characteristics change with age, limiting its usefulness in identifying older plants.

Short and highly portable, the book covers the most common species in plantings. The only thing that would have delighted me more would have been having this type of information on even more species. Overall, this is an excellent resource, and one I look forward to using often.

H.L. Hillhouse, *Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, University of Nebraska–Lincoln.*