Nature Land County Park

Walworth County, Wisconsin

Prairie Trail

By:
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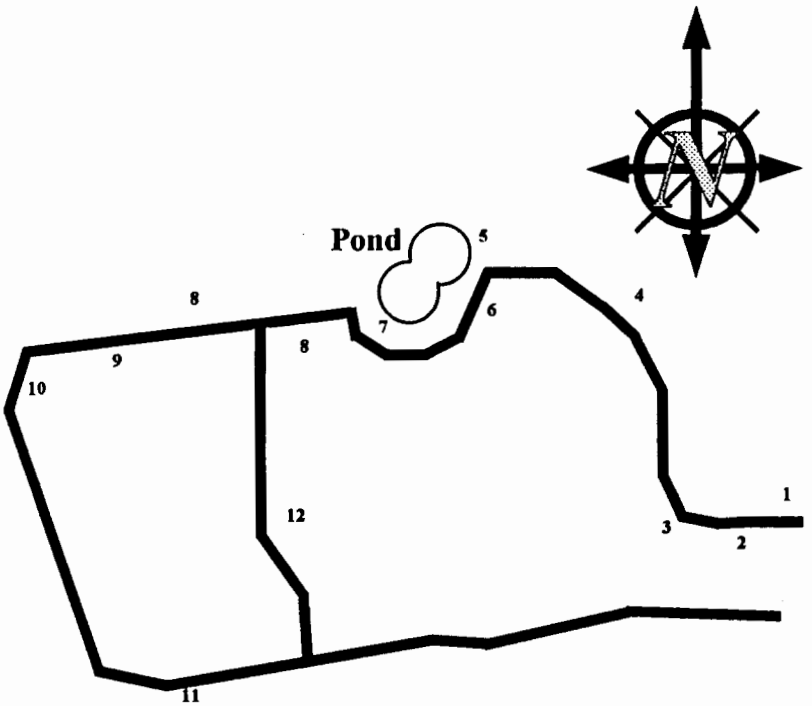
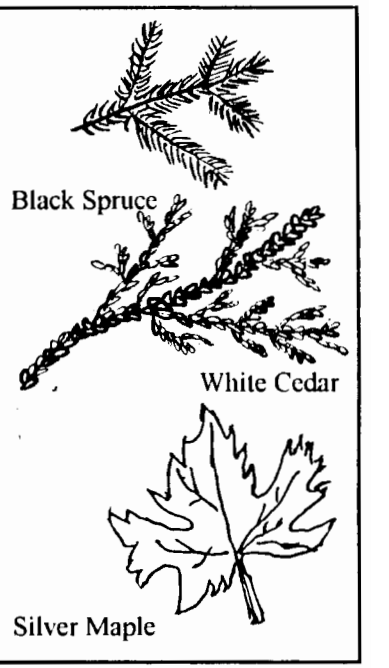
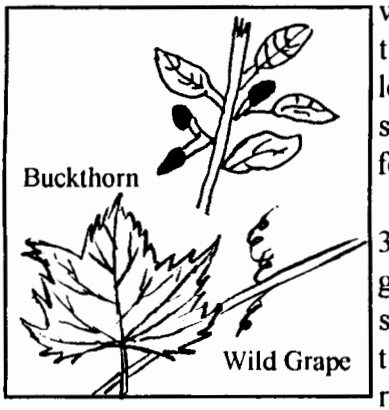


Prairie Trail

1. This is the beginning to the prairie trail. The first part of the trail is rather wet in the spring and dries out as the trail goes on. Listen for birds and their songs on this trail, for they are abundant. As we start, **honeysuckle, boxelder, silver maple**, and **buckthorn** can be seen. Two evergreens, the **black spruce** and the **white cedar**, will appear. The black spruce has single, short, dark green needles, while the white cedar is flat (looks like lace that has been ironed). White cedar attracts deer as a food source so watch for deer tracks. Notice the large woody stemmed grapevine climbing the maple tree.

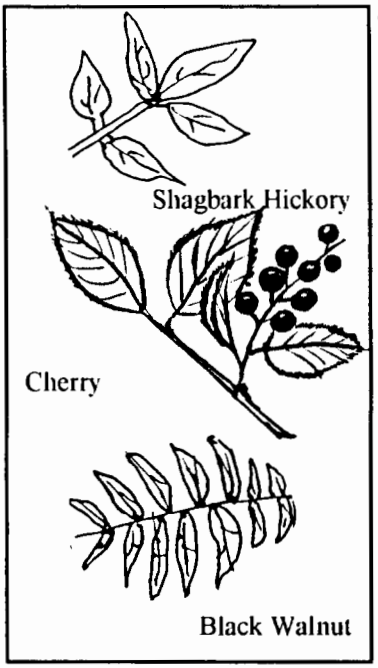


2. Just over the little bridge is a swampy area. Here you will find **willow**, as they like their roots near the water. **Prairie dock** can be seen along the trail. It has large heart-shaped leaves growing in a bunch. A flower stalk with yellow flowers will rise 5 to 7 feet in the air.



3. Many stands of **buckthorn** will be growing along the trail. Often you will see **grapevine** growing on or over the trees. Clusters of grapes may be seen ripening in the fall. Just before you turn to go up the trail, small white flowers with 5 petals can be seen in June. These are **Canada anemone**.

If you turn to the right, you will see a small spring fed stream full of **watercress.**

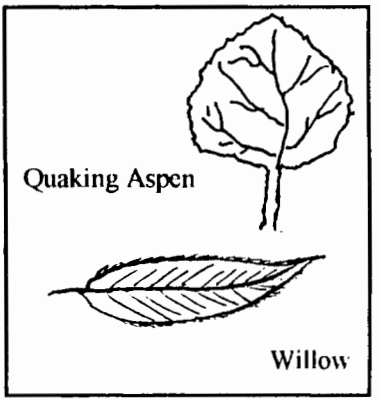


4. On the ascent up the path, you will notice **shagbark hickory, cherry, walnut**, and **white oak**. Look at the two white oaks, one on each side of the trail. The leaf has smooth rounded lobes. **Solomon's plume** is growing under these trees.

5. **Pond side** - The pond is busy with life. The frogs are croaking, dragonflies are hovering about, and don't forget the mosquitoes that are biting. The pond is lined with **willow, boxelder, red osier dogwood**, etc... A quick look around the grassy area will show you burdock, and thistle.

6. Back on the trail - A **bluebird house** stands here ready to adopt a new family. **Walnut trees** are nearby. A walnut leaf is a compound leaf with 9-21 leaflets. A lacy, leafed plant can be found right in the path by the bird house. It is **yarrow** which will bloom in June with a white flower on top .

7. Pond end - Here you can see many **willow**, and **walnut trees** covered with **grapevines**. Look for a path, it follows the pond around to a drinking area for animals. This is probably used by many different kind of animals.

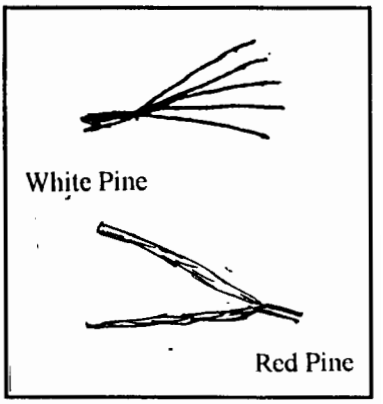


8. Listen to the **quaking aspen**! Even the slightest breeze makes the leaves

tremble. The movement is due to the flattened petiole or stem of this leaf. The bark of the tree is a yellow green color. Often people will say it is a birch because of the light colored bark. Not so. The leaf reminds me of fifty cent pieces blowing in the wind.

9. You are now entering the **prairie area**. Notice the difference in plant life. On the left are **prairie grasses** while on the right you will see **goldenrod, willow , spruce, white cedar**, and **dogwood.**

10. Take the path through the pines. You will notice **white pine** (5 needles), **spruce** (single needle), **white cedar** (flattened), **red** or **Norway pine** (2 needles).



11. As you emerge from the conifer forest and go left, notice the **sumac** standing tall with last years berries. Look for **grapevines, garlic mustard, bedstraw, lichens** on the side of conifers, **cones** on the ground, **cherry, plum**, and **wild geranium.**

12. Just beyond the conifer forest is a path to the left that will take you back into the prairie. Here you will find a patch of **wild black raspberry** bushes. Don't go too near as they have thorns which are sharp. Turn around and head back toward the road. Take a left and the path will lead you to the entrance where you drove into Nature Land.

This prairie trail offers a unique view. Prairie flowers tend to bloom in the summer and create a beautiful sight. This trail can also be good for skiing in the winter months. Visit the trail year round to enjoy its beauty.