

DNR Grant 01-001W Final Report

Benefits gained by students, school, community and state:

Our high school students, elementary students community and the state will benefit greatly from the resources for the improvement of our Science Club Prairie Plot made possible from the grant of \$1000 awarded by the Department of Natural Resources. Our high school students have benefited, and will continue to benefit from the knowledge they gain while working in the prairie plot, weeding, identifying plants while weeding, spreading mulch, assisting with a controlled burn in April, 2001 and laying the blocks for the path which will assist elementary students and community adults to traverse the plot. These students have learned to identify various grasses and forbs, become familiar with the conditions necessary for the growth of various of these plants, identified insects and other animals which are found in the plot and probably most significantly learned to appreciate the beauty of our native plants and animals and the necessity of preserving the environment necessary for them to grow and prosper. These students will continue to have "ownership" in the plot long after each of them graduate from high school.

Elementary students have already benefited from the plot as they walk through the site and have the various species of plants/animals identified by Mrs. Shadwick. With the addition of the blocks to walk on, younger students/teachers will be more likely to walk through the area at various times and learn to identify plants from the labels which will now be marking many of the forbs and grasses.

Because the baseball diamond is very close, parents and other guests often walk over to the plot and browse through the area. Many people had expressed the concern of where they should walk. That problem is solved with the addition of stone paths. The addition of labels for the plants will also aid in identification. All persons will benefit from the appreciation of an unsculptured plant area. Everyone will also learn the name of at least one plant each time he/she visits.

The publicity given the DNR by the local media will obviously be positive in this rural "bedroom" community. Many farmers in the area are also appreciative of the opportunity to see some of the native plants.

Materials/labor donated to project:

Weeding, planting, spreading mulch, and laying blocks: VGHS Science Club students and Mrs. Shadwick

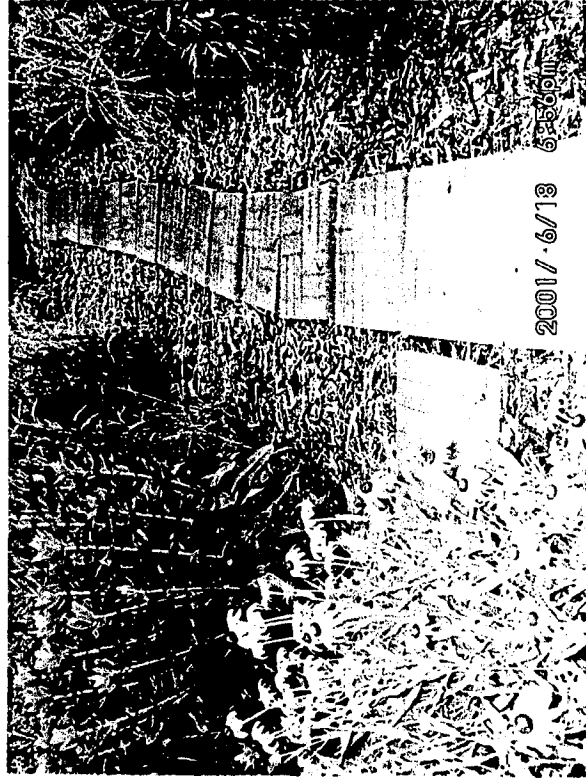
Application of Round up: Ruth Green

Railroad Ties: Jerry Johnson, Mike Leon and Union Pacific Railroad

Mulch: Ameren CIPS tree trimming crews



*Villa Grove Schools Prairie Plot 2000-
note especially lack of railroad ties
and walking blocks.*



Villa Grove Schools Prairie
Plot 2001 - note
addition of railroad ties
and walking blocks and
additional plants

From: 5/17/01 Villa Grove News

Students Conduct Controlled Prairie Burn



Members of the Villa Grove High School Science Club are shown inspecting the Prairie Plot area after a "burn" was conducted on Apr. 18. Controlled burns aid in the control of non-prairie plants and return vital nutrients to the soil. Members of the Villa Grove Fire Dept. assisted the Science Club in setting and controlling the fire. Their help was invaluable in overseeing any possible complications.

As is apparent in the picture, many

non-prairie plants are still present in the area. Procurement and planting of new species will proceed in the next few weeks.

Monetary funds for the purchase of plants, stepping stones, mulch, and other needed materials is made possible because of a \$1,000 grant from the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources. This grant is used to educate both children and adults about the appearance

and uses of our native prairie plant populations. Eric Smith from the IDNR is the administrator of the grant and the local administrator is Linda Shadwick, Science Club sponsor.

The Science Club invites you to visit the plot located just west of the high school baseball diamond. The types of plants in blossom and butterflies present vary throughout the spring, summer, and fall, so visit often.