

## Dudgeon-Monroe Prairie

The Dudgeon-Monroe Prairie is at the southeast corner where the Southwest Path intersects with Odana Road. In 2000, when the construction of the bike path was nearly completed, parked at the current site on asphalt were two large trailers --the construction headquarters--trucks, bulldozers and other equipment. Sue Reindollar, a prairie enthusiast who knows a thing or two about prairies, lived nearby.

The visionary and determined Sue Reindollar decided that the staging area was the perfect place for a prairie. The construction trailers and equipment were removed while crushed asphalt remained. Through the efforts of Madison City Engineering staff tons of soil were trucked in. The asphalt is now buried under a foot of soil which is just right for prairie plants and grasses. During the first year, volunteers from several neighborhoods, under Sue's guidance, planted 320 forbs and grasses. They also spread seeds sourced from Wisconsin suppliers and prairie sites, including Audubon's Goose Pond in Arlington, and Pleasant Valley Conservancy, near Black Earth.

To quote Sue: "the plants are thriving in spite of it all". Sue's dedication over the years is one reason why this prairie continues to thrive. She and dedicated volunteers created and maintained what is often considered to be the crown jewel of all the prairies along the Path.

You will find many species blooming seasonally here, including both the tall compass plant and prairie dock, yellow and pale purple coneflowers, little and big bluestem and Indian grasses, the impressive bush-size wild indigo, New England aster, bottle gentian, butterfly weed, and milkweed.

If you visit in late summer, clusters of migrating Monarch butterflies will be feeding on patches of prairie and meadow blazing-star. Some years you will find up to fifty of these endangered species stopping to feed and rest while on their way to Mexico. If you are visiting during some other time of the year, returning to witness the Monarch butterflies would be worthwhile.



If you visit, watch for the path near the east end of the prairie and on the south side that will take you into the prairie and its backside. Savor the view and take a few deep breaths of prairie-infused air while enjoying this gift from Sue and dedicated volunteers. Also appreciate how these prairie plants, with their deep roots, filter and keep stormwater onsite, helping prevent nutrient rich water from entering nearby Lake Wingra, thus improving the water quality of Madison's wonderful lakes.