



photo by Carolyn Fannon

Project Blazingstar



Hermann Park

## Project Description

Historically, much of Houston and parts of Hermann Park were covered by a sprawling, vibrant grassland known as the Coastal Prairie. This landscape was dominated by tallgrasses towering up to 8 feet above the ground in fall. As development proceeded, fires were halted, and trees were grown, the prairie became increasingly rare and now is listed as a critically endangered ecosystem with few native prairies left in Harris County and no remaining sites left in Hermann Park.



Rice Institute (University) and surroundings 1916  
photo by Rice University

The Hermann Park Conservancy (HPC), Coastal Prairie Partnership (CPP), and Texas Master Naturalists are teaming up on a multiyear effort to restore three small but highly visible areas in Hermann Park back to native prairie. The goal is to replace non-native, weedy grasses at the targeted sites with a diverse assortment of colorful native warm-season grasses and wildflowers to create better habitat for birds, butterflies, rabbits, and other park wildlife while augmenting the aesthetic qualities of existing grasslands. Another benefit of this project, and a small prairie garden planned for the Houston Zoo, is that it will help to raise awareness of prairie conservation among the Houstonians and others visiting this very popular park.



The success of this effort will rely on volunteers clearing areas of brush, seed collecting, growing native plants, and performing prairie rescues. The coordination of these activities will be shared between CPP, HPC, and Texas Master Naturalists.

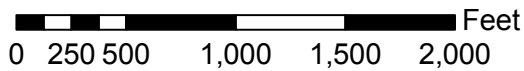
Additional assistance may be provided by the Houston Zoo and Mercer Botanical Garden. HPC and CPP have set a 1st-year goal of planting more than 2000 prairie plants using a combination of both rescued and cultivated plants.

## Map of project restoration areas

The map below illustrates the three restoration areas. Prairies A and C will be extensively restored during 2009-2010 as well as a small portion of Prairie B (designated “the meadow”).



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## Timeline of Events, 2009-2010

### Summer 2009

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- Collection of annual wildflower seeds for usage in seed ball production and dispersal (to take place in Fall 2009). Species to include *Monarda* sp., Indian blanket, Mexican hat, tickseed, Evening primrose, etc.
- Collection of perennial spring and summer wildflower and grass seeds for use in seed grow out efforts. Species to include Switchgrass, *Baptisa* sp., Black-eyed Susan, etc.
- Two evening work parties focusing on clear brush from prospective prairie restoration areas (starting with area near lake). **Update: HPC is already working on this**

### Fall 2009

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- Close mowing of prairie sites for distribution of seed balls
- Production and distribution of seed balls using HPC volunteers, scout groups, etc. Seed balls need one week to dry after they are made. Distribution can continue throughout fall and early spring.
- Collection of fall-blooming wildflower and grass seeds (October 2009)
- Lay down seeds for phase 1 spring blooming wildflowers, such as *Baptisa* sp., American basketflower, *Liatris* sp., and fall-blooming grass seeds, such as Big bluestem, Little bluestem, Yellow indiagrass, and Switchgrass.
- Selection and preparation of planting stage area(s) in Hermann Park?

### Winter 2009-2010

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- Work parties needed to rake leaves from prairie restoration area to prevent covering up of seed balls (January 2010)
- Lay down more phase 1 fall-blooming and select summer-blooming wildflower seeds such as Texas coneflower, Guara, etc. (January 2010)
- 1st bump up of selected phase 1 plants such as *Baptisia*, etc. (February-March 2010)

### Spring 2010

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- 2nd bump up of phase 1 plants in preparation for transplantation (March-April). This will occur about 6 weeks after first bump up.
- Lay down seed for all 1000 phase 2 plants. These plants will be more grass dominant.
- First prairie planting event of 1000 plants in May 2010

### Summer 2010

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- 2nd bump up of phase 2 plants (late May or early June)
- Second prairie planting event of 1000 plants in late June or early July 2010

## Targeted Species

Species	Bloom Period	Bloom & Plant Color(s)
1.Little bluestem	Fall	Blue-green
2.Big bluestem	Fall	Blue-green-red
3.Muhly grass	Summer-Fall	Purple
4.Switchgrass	Summer	Green
5.Texas coneflower	Summer	Yellow
6.Blazingstar	Summer-Fall	Purple
7.Guara	Spring-Summer	White
8.Horsemint/Beebalm	Spring-Summer	White to Purple
9.False indigo	Spring	Yellow
10.American Basketflower	Summer	Purple
11.Tickseed	Spring	Yellow-Red
12.Maximillian Sunflower	Summer	Yellow
13.Swamp Sunflower	Fall	Yellow
14.Blue Mistflower	Spring-Winter	Purple
15.Indian Blanket	Spring	Red-purple
16.Milkweed	Spring	Green
17.Rattlesnake Master	Summer	Green
18.Black-eyed Susan	Spring-Summer	Yellow
19.Late-flowering Boneset	Fall	Yellow
20.Brown-seed paspalum	Summer	Green

## Project Contacts

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## Return of the Natives: A Gallery



*Brown-seed Paspalum*



*Big Bluestem*



*Little Bluestem*



*Switchgrass*



*Horsemint*



*Gulf Muhly Grass*



*Kansas Blazingstar*



*Purple Mistflower*



*Guara or Beeblossum*



*Maximillian Sunflower*



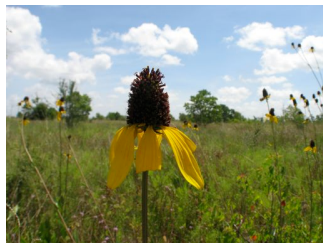
*False Indigo*



*Black-eyed Susan*



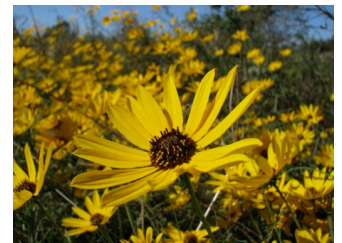
*Late-flowering Boneset*



*Texas Coneflower*



*Tickseed Coreopsis*



*Swamp Sunflower*



*Rattlesnake Master*



*American Basketflower*



*Green Milkweed*



*Indian Blanket*

Photo Credits: **Carolyn Fannon** – Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Switchgrass, Gulf Muhly Grass, Kansas Blazingstar **Lisa Spangler** – Rattlesnake Master, **Jaime Gonzalez** – Horsemint, Guara, Maximillian & Swamp Sunflower, Texas Coneflower, Green Milkweed, Boneset **Norman Flaigg** – Indian Blanket **Marcus Joseph** – American Basketflower