



Gabis Arboretum at

**PNW**

# Self-Guided Tallgrass Prairie Tour

## **The Gabis Arboretum Prairie**

The Gabis Arboretum prairie covers approximately 40 acres. The prairie used to be farmland and was used to grow crops. The arboretum's Founders (Damien and Rita Gabis) along with volunteers restored the land back to a tallgrass prairie. Plantings took place at various times from 1996 to 2000.

Trails at the arboretum direct visitors along the perimeter of the prairie in an effort to reduce disturbance to prairie wildlife and restore habitat to natural nesting conditions. As a result, grassland-nesting birds that need a large area of undisturbed habitat to avoid predators and find the food they need for survival have abundantly returned to our prairies.

**Why are prairies important?** Prairies and savannas are home to thousands of native plants, birds and animals. Over 70% of the prairies in the United States have disappeared. The destruction and fragmentation of the original large tracts of prairie has made it difficult for many grassland birds to breed successfully.

**How is the prairie maintained?** Fire! Historically, North American tall grass prairies were sustained and regenerated through fire. Fire occurred naturally by lightning strikes but more frequently prairie fires were a product of manipulation of the environment by humans. Today, prairie remnants are created and maintained by controlled burning. Staff and volunteers, in coordination with local fire officials, carefully ignite areas of the prairie to rid it of pioneer woody plants and non-native invasive species. It is a safe but spectacular event that stimulates spring growth as vigorous grasses and wildflowers, also known as forbs, emerge from the ashes.

## **Fun Facts:**

- ❖ Over half, or about 65% of all plant mass on the prairie lies below the surface.
- ❖ Big Bluestem grass can grow up to 9 feet, both above and underground.
- ❖ Prairie plants help to feed and nourish pollinators like butterflies and bumble bees.
- ❖ The prairie changes with each season so there are always new plants, insects and mammals to see!
- ❖ Look around the prairie and you will see bird boxes throughout. The arboretum has 65 boxes on property. For more information on what types of birds reside in those boxes, ask for our birding guide.

# Prairie Plants & Grasses



Compass Plant



Purple Coneflower



Milkweed



Rattlesnake Master



Bee Balm



Prairie Dock



Virginia Wild Rye



Switchgrass



Big Bluestem



Wild Bergamot