



# GHF NEWS

Spring Edition

April 2026

## MAY PLANT SALES: Lawrence and Emporia!

### Upcoming Events

#### Groundhogs Workdays:

Snyder Prairie, Mayetta, KS, Weather dependent!  
Saturdays (April 11, May 9, June 13)

Sign up for email updates at  
[ghflandmanagement@gmail.com](mailto:ghflandmanagement@gmail.com)

#### Spring Native Plant Sales

- May 9 in Emporia  
9 AM-noon, 601 E 18<sup>th</sup> Ave
- May 16 in Lawrence  
10 AM-1 PM, 1011 Vermont

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In Lawrence, the 14th Annual Spring Native Plant Sale will be Saturday, May 16th, 10 AM to 1 PM at Trinity Episcopal Church, 1011 Vermont St. We'll have ~ 65 species available. All plants are free of neonicotinoid pesticides and are native to Kansas. Once again, we will be offering pre-orders exclusively for GHF members at a discounted price of \$4.00 per plant, with a few exceptions for "premium" species. Plants will be sold for \$4.50 each on May 16th, available to anyone with no pre-order. **GHF members may pre-order plants from April 27 to May 11.** Our online storefront debut last year was a big hit, and we are thrilled to bring it back for 2026! Please watch your inbox for an email with further details on our pre-order process this year. For more information on becoming a member, and to learn how to pre-order, visit [www.grasslandheritage.org/plantsale](http://www.grasslandheritage.org/plantsale) or email [grasslandheritage@gmail.com](mailto:grasslandheritage@gmail.com).

Spring sales are GHF's biggest fundraiser, with proceeds supporting our mission of prairie preservation through education, stewardship, and land protection. **Dr. Liz Koziol and her company MycoBloom will be at the sale so stop by to learn how native soil fungi improve plant vigor and order custom blends of fungal inoculum.** We also will offer discounted **Rain Garden kits through our partnership with the City of Lawrence.** Rain gardens are important in urban ecosystems: they provide wildlife habitat, intercept storm water runoff and filter pollutants to improve groundwater quality.

The **Emporia** native plant sale is at the **Prophet Aquatic Research and Outreach Center (PAROC, 601 E. 18th Ave.)** on **Saturday May 9th from 9 AM to 12 PM.** Kathy Denning will give an educational talk on gardening with natives from 9 AM to 9:30 AM. The plant sale and activities will follow and conclude at noon. Native Lands Restoration Collaborative and Dr. Daphne Mayes will also lead a hike through Emporia State University's Campus Prairie.

Our sales would not be possible without our **incredible army of volunteers** who generously donate their time tagging plants, helping with set up and tear down, and assisting customers. **To learn more about volunteering to support plant sales, please email Kathy Denning at [grasslandheritage@gmail.com](mailto:grasslandheritage@gmail.com).**



**Grassland Heritage Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization dedicated to prairie preservation and education.**

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### **GHF Officers**

President: Mike Campbell  
Vice-President: Roxie McGee  
Secretary: Laird Ingham  
Treasurer: Steve Case  
Assistant to the Treasurer: Kevin Bachkora

### **Board of Governors**

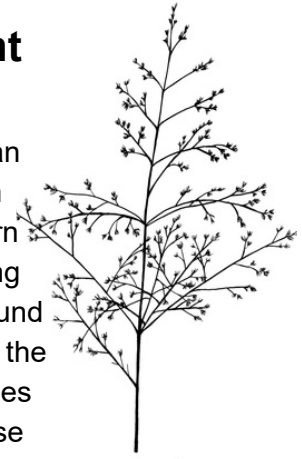
Helen Alexander, Lawrence  
Lisa Ball, Lawrence  
Reb Bryant, Lawrence  
Laura Budke, Emporia  
Mike Campbell, Eudora  
Steve Case, Overland Park  
Lisa Castle, Lawrence  
Ann Davin, Lawrence  
Steve Holcomb, Olathe  
Sue Holcomb, Olathe  
Laird Ingham, Lawrence  
Liz Koziol, Lawrence  
Daphne Mayes, Emporia  
Roxie McGee, Lawrence  
Brent Mortensen, Atchison  
Andrea Repinsky, Lawrence  
Sandy Sanders, Lawrence  
Megan Withiam, Lawrence  
Tyler Warner, Holton  
Chip Taylor, Emeritus, Lawrence

**Program Director: Kathy Denning**

**Preserve Manager: Nicole Stanton-Wilson**

## **A Note from the President**

As a prairie enthusiast, I am a big fan of fires, both big and small. With that in mind, it will come as no surprise to learn that I have added some fire to my spring and summer yard clean-up routine around the house. I face a constant battle with the branches shed from the big silver maples in my yard and my neighbors, plus those from a dying old crabapple that I keep around because the woodpeckers like it. I hated just tossing all these branches in the trash, but there were too many to compost and I didn't know what else to do with them. Then I discovered the magic of biochar.



Biochar is just a fancy way of saying charcoal, so people have known how to make it for centuries. Indeed, in some parts of the world charcoal still represents an important source of fuel for cooking and heating. However, my love for biochar stems from a different source. The carbon in biochar is in a form that is bio-unavailable. Another fancy term, that just means that plants and microbes can't eat the carbon in biochar. As a result, the carbon in biochar remains in the charcoal for centuries or even millennia, as long as the charcoal isn't burned.

Luckily, it just so happens that biochar is a top-notch soil additive. It helps soils retain both moisture and nutrients, making them richer and more productive.

(Continued on page 4)



GHF Board. Photo from our January 17th board meeting.  
*Front row left to right:* Mike Campbell, Reb Bryant, Sue Holcomb, Andrea Repinsky, Helen Alexander, Liz Koziol.  
*Back row left to right:* Laird Ingham, Lisa Ball, Megan Withiam, Steve Holcomb, Ann Davin, Steve Case, Laura Budke, Brent Mortensen. *Not in picture:* Daphne Mayes, Sandy Sanders, Roxie McGee, Lisa Castle, Tyler Warner

# Meet the new members of our Board of Governors

My name is **Laura Budke** and I am a graduate student at Emporia State University studying prairie restorations and prairie-pollinator interactions, as well as new DNA extraction methods for monitoring pollinators. I grew up in the Flint Hills and have always been fond of the prairie and its many creatures. I am deeply passionate about conservation and I aspire to build a career centered on educating the public about protecting and sustaining our natural world. The mission of GHF aligns perfectly with my own goals and I am excited to be a part of it.



research on beneficial fungi into practical tools for land managers and growers. I'm excited to serve on the board because of its focus on prairie conservation, restoration, and education, and I'm passionate about advancing science-based approaches that help prairies thrive for future generations.

My name is **Ann Davin** and I'm a native of Washington State. I moved to Lawrence at the end of 2016 from Casper, WY after spending many years in several states throughout the eastern US. I retired from my career as a Diabetes Care and Education Specialist (RN Diabetes Educator) two years ago, and have enjoyed gardening, learning about native plants, and incorporating them into my gardens and landscape. I have often participated in GHF plant sales, prairie restoration (including in my own back yard), seed collection and cleaning, and prairie projects at Leadplant, Prairie Park, and Snyder prairies.



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## A special thank you to the Holcombs

While we welcome new board members, we also want to thank the many GHF supporters who have been with us for decades. High on this list is **Sue and Steve Holcomb**. These special people have done so much for GHF and prairie conservation. The Holcombs are moving this year to near Rolla, Missouri to be closer to their children and grandchildren. We wish them the very best and sincerely thank them for their work with GHF. This summer's newsletter will share examples of their many, many contributions.

I'm **Tyler Warner** and I look forward to working with the Board to advance the stewardship and long-term management of native grasslands and associated wildlife habitats. I bring more than 20 years of experience managing both public and private lands, with a professional focus on fire ecology, prescribed fire implementation, and habitat restoration. My career has included work with wildlife agencies in Kansas, Missouri, and South Dakota, where I have helped conservation efforts aimed at sustaining grassland ecosystems and diverse wildlife populations.



I'm **Liz Koziol**, a mycorrhizal ecologist and applied fungal scientist working at the intersection of prairie restoration, agriculture, and microbial ecology. I have been conducting prairie restoration research for nearly 20 years. My research focuses on how native soil fungi support plant establishment, resilience, and long-term ecosystem function—particularly in grasslands and prairies. I'm also the founder of MycoBloom, where I work to translate academic



GHF created this fund to help groups better manage their prairie plantings and/or improve their educational use. For more details, see the GHF website and note that **we accept applications two times a year (July 30 is the next deadline)**. A big thanks to **Susan Lordi Marker** who has provided generous financial support for this program. **Note also that Dennis and Susan Lordi Marker have pledged to match donations to the Sustaining Prairies Fund. Designate your donation and double its impact!**

This spring we funded seven organizations: **Eisenhower High School** (Goddard) will focus on removal of invasive plants, **Service Valley Charter Academy** (Parsons) is using GHF money for gardening tools and materials for studying insects, **Coleman Environmental Magnet Middle School** (Wichita) has plans to pay a consultant and buy tools for prairie management, **Conway Springs High School** (Conway Springs) is interested in student interns, signage, and insect studies, the **EmberHope Foundation** (Newton) needs compost, signage, and tools for prairie management, **Wichita Northwest High School** (Wichita) wants to purchase management tools, perform insect surveys, and create signage, and **Hiawatha High School** (Hiawatha) will hire a consultant to help with removal of invasive plants.

**The KC Farm School shares their use of their 2025 Sustaining Prairie Funds:** GHF funds supported the professional expertise, equipment, and staff time required to ensure the continued success of our multiple prairie installations. We collaborated with Patti Ragsdale, a native plant expert and owner of Botanical Belonging, to refine our prairie management strategies. Patti worked with KC Farm School’s Director, Lydia, and staff to support planting and maintaining the edible native plant garden at Common Ground. In addition, Patti



provided guidance on the timing of seed application in the Prairie Ribbons across KC Farm School’s farms and prairie restoration. Patti also led staff in conducting the first prescribed burn in the prairie restoration area at Common Ground. Our staff created a comprehensive Prairie Management Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), incorporating insights from Patti’s consultation and outlining actionable guidelines to sustain prairie health over time, ensuring continuity of care. The SOP will guide future staff and community members in caring for the health of our oak savanna prairie and prairie ribbons across the 14.5 acres at KC Farm School.

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**We thank Jay Chatham for his generous funding of Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarships, which support graduate students doing research on prairies.** This spring we awarded funds to: **Holly Andres, KU**, “Breaking the cedar legacy: integrating fire and native mycorrhizal inoculation to restore tallgrass prairie communities;” **Torsha Goswami, KSU**, “Woody encroachment and decreasing prairie stream water levels in the Flint Hills;” **Alex Hoffpauir, KU**, “Plant and microbe diversity as predictors of prairie community development and invasion resistance;” **Anna Hovious, KSU**, “Connecting stomatal traits to gene expression in a native prairie grass across the Great Plains rainfall gradient: finding climate-resilient genes for conservation;” **Corina McTigue, KSU**, “Bison grazing lawns in tallgrass prairie: Furthering the current understanding of complex interactions between grasses, grazing, and short-term drought;” **Kate Schmidt, WSU**, “Take me to your cedar: Effects of *Juniperus virginiana* encroachment in grasslands on floral-visiting insects and their forb resources;” and **Sophie Wieland, KSU**, “Managing woody encroachment: does browsing control clonal shrub populations?”



# GHF Prairie Presentation: Stan Herd

GHF has been busy bringing speakers to northeast Kansas. In November 2024, we hosted **Chris Helzer**, a prairie ecologist at The Nature Conservancy-Nebraska. **Liz Koziol**, an expert on prairie soil fungi, talked in November 2025. Our latest talk was on February 21, 2026, when renowned earthworks artist **Stan Herd** shared an overview of his life and artistic journey to a packed house at the Lawrence Public Library (who generously co-hosted the event).



Herd’s roots in Kansas are deep; he hails from a farm in Comanche County, in southwest Kansas. He described how his experience painting murals, the influence of artists such as Christo Javacheff, and his fascination with Indigenous geoglyphs led him to start experimenting with earthworks art. This form of art uses the earth as a canvas—employing mowing, planting, fire, and stonework to create “living murals” on a massive scale. Herd related that his proficiency and interest in this physically challenging art medium arose naturally from a childhood spent using the family tractor to work the land.

The themes of Herd’s earthworks vary widely, often touching on pressing social, environmental, and political topics. Herd highlighted several of his Kansas earthworks, including his representation of Kiowa War Chief Satanta and his portrait of Aldo Leopold. Herd also shared stories of his work in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and his earthwork portraits of Indigenous women in China and Mexico.

Herd is far from slowing down. He recently spent 6 months painting a massive mural at the Kansas Museum of History, and he is planning to create an earthwork portrait of Pope Leo XIV in Peru. “You know I’m 75,” he said, “and all my good stuff’s yet to come.”

The full video of Herd’s talk can be found on our website at [www.grasslandheritage.org](http://www.grasslandheritage.org).

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## President’s note, continued from page 2

When you make biochar and dig it into the ground in your garden or flower beds, you improve the growing conditions for your plants while also locking up carbon in the soil and out of the atmosphere. I’m not going to pretend that making a bit of biochar in my yard represents a major blow in the war on climate change. However, every little bit helps and this is at least one thing I can do in a world that sometimes seems to be designed to make me feel helpless.

Making biochar turns out to be dead simple. It’s based on the incomplete combustion of wood, which means burning the wood a bit but not too much. The easiest way to accomplish this is to start burning some sticks, then pile more on top when the first batch really gets going. The new sticks restrict air flow to the starters so their combustion slows, then stops. Once the second batch is going great guns, you just pile more on top of them and so on until you’ve worked through your pile.

You don’t need any fancy equipment to make biochar. You can do it in a literal hole in the ground. I use a fire pit stand we have on our back patio. The technique I feel is a fairly crude one, and you can find videos detailing more sophisticated techniques on YouTube. It’s also a good source for general introductory material. I heartily recommend biochar manufacture to everyone. Not only for the environmental benefits, but because burning things is a good source of catharsis which is something I find myself increasingly in need of.

Mike Campbell ([shamsoup@yahoo.com](mailto:shamsoup@yahoo.com))

# Local and landscape habitat impacts on plant-pollinator interactions on Conservation Reserve Program Plantings

(by Heather Poyner, a recipient of a Gaylord Atkinson Memorial Scholarship)

Pollinators are critical for maintaining healthy prairies. In the Great Plains, pollinator populations are declining due to habitat loss resulting from the conversion of native prairies to row-crop agriculture and the invasion of woody plants and exotic grasses. Private land conservation approaches, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), offer a potential solution. The CRP is a voluntary program administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency in which agricultural producers and landowners convert cropland into conservation plantings. The CRP includes various planting types that focus on restoring specific environmental functions or ecosystem services. Popular planting types in Kansas include Permanent Native Grasses (CP-2), Rare and Declining Habitat (CP-25), and Pollinator Habitat (CP-42). These differ primarily in seed mix composition.

For my master's research, I evaluated the effectiveness of these CRP types in supporting pollinator communities and determining how local and landscape habitat features influence their effectiveness. I took data at 22 sites in Kansas (19 CRP plantings, 3 public, non-CRP grasslands). At each site I recorded interactions between plants and pollinators by watching each blooming forb species for 20 min. and collecting any pollinators that visited its flowers during that time period. I took data on local resource availability by recording the abundance and richness of forbs. Because most bee species nest underground, soil characteristics may affect local nesting habitat quality for pollinators. Therefore, I quantified the percentage of sand in soil cores. I also measured the amount of grassland cover surrounding each site to evaluate the quality of habitat in the landscape.



ness were more affected by site-specific habitat features than planting type per se. For instance, pollinator richness decreased as the percentage of sand in the soil increased. We also found that the effectiveness of diverse seed mixes depended on the habitat quality in the surrounding landscape. For example, pollinator abundance and richness were positively affected by forb richness within plantings surrounded by high grassland cover, suggesting that the landscape acted as a source of pollinators that could be attracted to conservation plantings. On the other hand, forb richness did not affect pollinator abundance or richness in areas of low grassland cover. This may have been because there were too few pollinators in the landscape that could respond to local floral resource availability. This suggests that it may be more important to establish additional conservation plantings than to invest in a single high-quality planting in landscapes with little to no natural habitat cover. CRP planting types did not differ significantly in the resulting abundance and diversity of floral resources, and therefore local management through prescribed burning and/or grazing may be needed to see the benefits of more diverse, expensive CRP seed mixes.

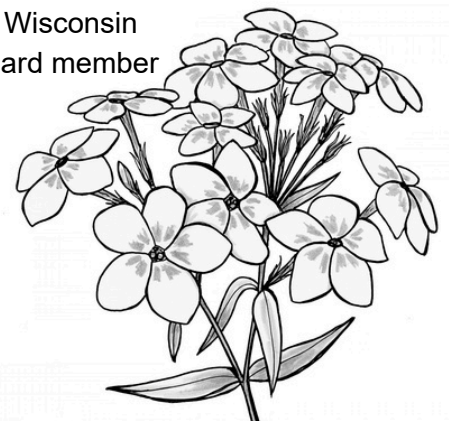
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## New this newsletter: plant drawings



In this and future newsletters, look for drawings by **Linda Forbess**, a botanical illustrator in Wisconsin (and sister of GHF board member Helen Alexander).

- p.1: Grayhead prairie coneflower
- p.2: Switchgrass
- Right: Prairie phlox



We found that pollinator abundance and rich-

We depend on your contributions! Please help GHF protect prairies by sending your donation. The date of your last contribution is printed above your name on the mailing label. Donate online or send this form to Grassland Heritage Foundation, PO Box 394, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201.

Membership  \$15 Student/Retiree  \$20 Friend  \$35 Family  \$50 Steward  \$100 Sustaining  
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Contact me about volunteering (we can always use help!)

Let us know if your financial donation is in *honor* or in *memory* of someone (CIRCLE "honor" or "memory" and note name below):  
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Newsletter options (check one):  Email color PDF newsletter (*help us save on postage/printing*)  
OR  Send B & W printed newsletter to the above address

Your contribution will support prairie conservation in our general fund unless you designate your donation for:  
 Gaylor Atkinson Memorial scholarship (support graduate student research in prairies)  
 Sustaining Prairie fund (provide funds to schools and other groups to help with prairie management and educational use of prairie plantings)  
 Prairie protection  
 Education and outreach  
 Prairie management

NOTE: You can also send membership renewals and donations to GHF online at [www.grasslandheritage.org](http://www.grasslandheritage.org)



**THANK YOU!**

To Kevin Bachkora for help with our accounting.

To Stan Herd, for a great spring talk in our Prairie Presentation series, and to Jake Vail (Lawrence Public Library), Brent Mortensen, Sandy Sanders, and Lisa Ball for their work organizing and advertising this talk.

To Nicole Mittman, Andrea Repinsky, Lisa Ball, and Helen Alexander for their work on the 50 year t-shirt.

To the many GHF board members who carefully evaluated applications for the Sustaining Prairie Fund and the Gaylor Atkinson Memorial Scholarship.

To the volunteers that stayed dedicated and focused while conducting burns at Snyder Prairie: Jeff Beecher, Mike Campbell, Ann Davin, Craig Freeman, Hillary Kass, Loretta Stanton, and special thanks to Bruce Yonke.

**Special Donations**

**Welcome New Members:** Jeanne Apelseth, Marissa Fredrick, Kelly Hangauer

**Special Donations:**

**--Gaylor Atkinson Memorial Scholarship:**

Stephen Hight

**--Prairie Protection:** Marisa Fredrick, David L. Wagner, Dean and Lisa Goodell, Bitsey Patton, Andrea Repinsky

**--Education and Outreach:** Jeanne Apelseth, Kasey Fickel, Helen Alexander

**--Prairie Management:** Angie McDonnell, Carol Lunn, Kelly Overstreet, Anthony Taylor

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**--Walter Hrenchir:** Mary Ann Hill, Ronald and Dianne Danner Marstall, Cynthia and Raymond Beall, Carolyn and Craig Schiefelbein, Larry and Anita Marstall

**--Denise Louise Ward:** Carol Lunn

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## GHF's 50 year anniversary t-shirt

GHF was founded in 1976, so we are 50 years old this year. We are celebrating with a special prairie t-shirt that will be available at our spring plant sale. The shirt's design, shown on the right, was beautifully created by Nicole Mittman, who is both a wildlife biology technician and an artist. Nicole was born and raised in Nebraska, where she first started selling art in high school to raise money to go on a trip to Costa Rica. Her biological fieldwork includes collaring gray foxes in Illinois, recording wolf behavior at Yellowstone National Park, and her current work with endangered black-footed ferret populations in South Dakota's Badlands region for the nonprofit Prairie Wildlife Research.



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
GHF!**



Printed on recycled paper



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### Local prairie news/events:

- Google [www.thepitchKC.com](http://www.thepitchKC.com) and search for "Grassland Heritage" to read a March 10 article on GHF.
- The Lawrence Public Library is sponsoring six talks/films on "Rewilding the Prairie" between 4/14 and 5/23. (Google [www.lplks.org](http://www.lplks.org), search "events")