

GHF NEWS



Fall Edition

August 2026

Upcoming Events

Groundhogs Workdays

Snyder Prairie, Mayetta,
KS, Weather dependent!

Saturday, Sept. 12

(Collecting native prairie
seed and potentially some
dogwood control)

Sunday, Nov. 8

(Collecting native prairie
seed and potentially some
honeysuckle control)

Sign up for email updates at:
ghflandmanagement@gmail.com

Native Plant Sale

Sept. 17 - see details
to the right on this page

Prairie Presentations

see details page 5

- Bob Gress, Sept. 19,
Emporia
- Jill Haukos, Nov. 7,
Lawrence

SEPTEMBER PLANT SALE in Lawrence!

Location: 1832 Massachusetts St.

**GHF FALL PLANT SALE @ COTTIN'S
HARDWARE FARMERS MARKET**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

4:00 - 6:30

22 NATIVE SPECIES

PLANTS ARE \$5 EACH

50 YEARS
GRASSLAND
HERITAGE
FOUNDATION
PRESERVING
PRAIRIE

COTTIN'S
HARDWARE & RENTAL

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This year is GHF's 50-year anniversary!

In honor of this occasion, wildlife biologist
and artist **Nicole Mittman** created a special
t-shirt for our spring sale. They were very
popular. **We plan to sell both short-sleeved
and long-sleeved versions at the fall sale.**
See t-shirt design to the right.



To volunteer at plant sales, email grasslandheritage@gmail.com. Thanks!



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

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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: Chris Pool

A Note from the President

It's with mixed emotions that I have to announce that **Nicole Stanton-Wilson, our property manager at Snyder Prairie, has decided to trade grasslands for peat bogs and is moving to Ireland.** Naturally, we're all excited for her and maybe a tiny bit jealous about her getting to live in a country with such cool accents. Nonetheless, we're sorry to lose a dedicated and hard-working friend of the prairie. She did great work for us tromping around in the tall grass in all weathers from freezing cold to broiling heat in order to keep the sericea and dogwood at bay, and even taught herself the somewhat nerve-racking job of leading a controlled burn. People skills are as important for the property manager as plant skills and Nicole did a fantastic job of recruiting and managing volunteers, keeping them active and involved and motivated to turn out even in crummy conditions.

In addition to her management work, Nicole served a stint as our program director, helping to organize talks and running workdays at Blackjack Battlefield and Prairie Park in Lawrence. She did amazing work at our plant sales, helping to expand it to new heights. Even on her way out the door, she worked with Tyler Warner to launch a new program (see p. 3) to give grants to landowners to help them maintain grasslands through burning. It's never easy to say goodbye to a great friend and colleague, even when they are moving on to greener pastures (and Ireland is so green!), but we hope you'll look back on us and our blazing star with as much fondness as we'll look back on you. **Thanks for all that you did, Nicole! You'll be missed!** Send us a postcard when you get there!

Successful Spring Plant Sales

There was so much community enthusiasm for the spring plant sales in Emporia and Lawrence. The Emporia sale was held at Emporia State University's (ESU) Prophet Aquatic Research and Outreach Center (PAROC) on May 9. The morning kicked off with a "Gardening with Native Plants" seminar by GHF program director Kathy Denning, with the sale starting at 9:30. We had 13 native wildflower and grass species, including prairie classics like purple coneflower and little bluestem. Courtney Masterson of the Native Lands Restoration Collaborative and Daphne Mayes, Outreach Director at ESU and GHF board member, (continued on page 5)

Meet our new Preserve Manager, Chris Pool

My name is Chris Pool and I recently came on board as the Prairie Preserve Manager at Snyder Prairie. I was born and raised in the Naponee, Nebraska area which is in the south-central part of the state, just a few miles from the Kansas border. Growing up on our family farm/ranch developed my ties to the outdoors at a young age. I graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln waaaaay back in 1995. It really feels like an eternity ago! I have a degree in Wildlife Biology and Natural Resources. I worked for the USDA as well as the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in various positions. I have been self employed for the last 10 + years operating a nursery (Turkey Creek Trees) that specializes in fruit tree production. My wife, Tami, and I also own and operate a large Christmas tree farm (Seven Pines) just north of Meriden, KS.



I have two grown kids and two step-kids, the youngest being a sophomore in high school. As well as the recent addition of three grandsons, the youngest just being born in January. I am blessed to have all my family within a half days drive, but it does equate to a lot of miles driven in a year! I spend any free time that I have trying to do habitat improvement work on my own farm, archery hunting, and spending time with my family. I look forward to meeting everyone and spending time out on the prairie!

New GHF Fund! Light my Fire: GHF Private Landowner Cost-Share Fund

This year we are launching a pilot program to provide funds to private landowners to support and encourage the responsible use of fire as a land stewardship tool, especially for grasslands. We are particularly enthusiastic about our funds

being used to support landowners who will be using fire for the first time on their property. Why are we developing this program? Our experience combined with ecological research shows that fire is the most effective and cost-efficient tool for grassland stewardship. Fire not only benefits the native plants that we want to encourage, but also discourages woody vegetation and many undesirable, invasive plant species. Further, fire is the most underused tool for grassland stewardship simply due to fear or trepidation about wildfires breaking out (or away). Controlled burning, under proper conditions, is a safe and highly effective tool to support healthy grasslands. By offsetting the costs of prescribed burning by private landowners, GHF hopes to encourage a culture that embraces fire as grassland stewardship tool. This is a brand new program, and we don't have details about this fund on our website yet. If interested, please contact info@grasslandheritage.org.



Looking back: GHF History

The forerunner to the Grassland Heritage Foundation was the "Tallgrass Prairie Foundation" (TPF). TPF was created in 1976 to promote understanding of the "cultural, historical, and scientific value of the American tallgrass prairie." The TPF was a companion to the "Save the Tallgrass Prairie, Inc.," (STP, founded 1973), that built support for a Tallgrass Prairie National Park. STP was a lobbying group while TPF was a non-profit. Pushing for a "prairie national park" wasn't easy, and many groups were involved. Eventually the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve was created near Strong City, KS. The Tallgrass Prairie Foundation later changed its name to Grassland Heritage Foundation. GHF continues to focus on TPF's goals of education and prairie preservation.

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. **We accept applications in January and July.** A big thanks to **Susan Lordi Marker** for her financial support. **Dennis and Susan Lordi Marker have pledged to match donations to the Sustaining Prairies Fund, so designate your donation and double its impact!** See updates from past grants below:

*****Lawrence High School** shares that they purchased tools for maintaining their two prairie gardens and a nice library of prairie plant books. They also bought materials for an ongoing art and sustainability project and materials to assist with seed harvesting, cleaning, and storage (they give out seed packets at school events!). A student photographer started a portfolio of garden images as it changes through the year. Environmental Club students have begun using clay to create art-work using seeds and leaves, and they have plenty of materials to continue this project next year as well.



*****Lawrence Bird Alliance** efforts focused on the native garden in Hobbs Park in east Lawrence. GHF funding allowed them to buy tools, professional garden consultant time, and signs explaining the significance of native plants as food and habitat for birds and pollinators. They also have had help from Lawrence Boy Scout Troop 53 and the Native Lands Restoration Collaborative who will guide future volunteer events. Join them on Sept. 13 (5:30-7:30pm) and 27 (1-3pm) to clean up and celebrate the garden as they install additional signs funded by GHF and the Douglas County Master Gardener Program.

*** **Emporia State University** used funds for two projects. First, teachers, students, and community volunteers worked with staff from Native Lands Restoration Collaborative to remove invasive wintercreeper and honeysuckle from a riparian area

and then plant in native species.

Teacher workshops was a second

focus. Teachers were provided with a binder containing dichotomous keys, photographic keys, lesson plans, activities, and assessments (binders were 115 pages in length, single spaced, and

printed on both sides of paper!). With these binders and sampling equipment that teachers built, everyone could do hands-on work.



*****Lawrence Free State High School** students were excited to don brand new coveralls for their prairie fieldwork thanks to the GHF award. Their original orange coveralls were showing considerable wear after 13 years and hundreds of hours of student use. Appropriate clothing for field work is imperative-- teachers are relieved to have washable gear that protects students from insects, sun, and poison ivy. FSHS and College and Career Center teachers, students, and community advisors also worked together to design informational signage for Free State Prairie.



*****Atchinson High School** Using GHF funds, an Atchison High School teacher hired two students to help work on the school's prairie garden. They bought tools (hoes, shears, gloves, pruners) and everyone did a lot of weeding! Maintenance staff also removed poison ivy and invasive trees. The school is looking forward to adding seeds this winter to rejuvenate their original prairie plantings, as well as start new ones.



Two GHF Prairie Presentations this fall:

**Learn about
grassland birds
and
photography**



Emporia: Bob Gress

Time and Date: September 19, 10 a.m.

Location: Prophet Aquatic Research and Outreach Center, 551 E 18th Ave, Emporia

Bob Gress is a biologist, naturalist, and world-renowned wildlife photographer. He is a past director of the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita and has published many of his professional photos in nature magazines and over 60 books. Mr. Gress' talk, "A Changing World for Kansas Birds," is co-sponsored by GHF and PAROC (The Prophet Aquatic Research and Outreach Center) at Emporia State University. PAROC provides hands-on learning opportunities that helps connect the community with the natural world (especially aquatic and prairie ecosystems). This talk is part of "Science Saturday," a free event open to learners of all ages. Following the presentation, guests will have the opportunity to go birdwatching in Campus Prairie and Campus Woods with ornithologists Dr. William Jensen and graduate student Sarah Beismeier. The event will also feature many bird-themed activities such as birdhouse crafting and a native bird count.



**Learn about prairie
ecology and
education at the
Konza Prairie
Biological
Station (near
Manhattan, Kansas)**

Lawrence: Jill Haukos

Time and Date: November 7 at 3:30 pm

**Location: Lawrence Public Library,
707 Vermont St., Lawrence, KS**

Jill Haukos is the Director of Education at the Konza Prairie Biological Station (KPBS) located in

the Kansas Flint Hills. She grew up in South Dakota where a visit to a prairie remnant opened her eyes to the wonders of grassland ecology. After college, she taught biology at a community college in Texas (a job that helped her learn how to communicate complex biology to audiences with a short attention span!). Ms. Haukos started working at KPBS in 2012. The biological station consists of 8000+ acres of tallgrass prairie and stream-side forests. Kansas State University ecologists and others conduct world-class research at the site. She runs the Konza Environmental Education Program that connects K-12 students to prairies. Students learn how to collect ecological data and make conclusions—bringing home the value of scientific research to land management. Over 5,000 students are welcomed annually to Konza prairie with a lifetime total (since 1996) of over 100,000 students. Ms. Haukos' talk is co-sponsored by GHF and the Lawrence Public Library.

Continuation of "Successful Plant Sales" (p. 2)

led a tour of PAROC's Campus Prairie mid-morning. PAROC graduate and undergraduate assistants, including GHF board member Laura Budke, had educational arts and crafts activities on hand. We sold 361 plants in Emporia. We are very much looking forward to returning to Emporia next spring, and for all those who inquired, we promise to do our best to bring some cardinal flower plants next year!

Our Lawrence spring sale was also a big hit. Including plants sold in our website presale, GHF sold around 3500 plants. A fast seller this spring was *Phemeranthus calycinus*, commonly known as rock pink or fameflower. The bright fuchsia flowers of this prairie native are only open a few hours a day. New this year were GHF 50-year anniversary t-shirts. See page 1 for details (and note that we will have them at our fall plant sale). Rock pink will make another appearance at the fall plant sale as well.

GHF is very grateful for the many volunteers who helped out. We also sincerely appreciate Rev. Jennifer Allen and the parishioners of Trinity Episcopal Church in Lawrence for hosting the sale.

Many contributions of Sue and Steve Holcomb

In the April newsletter we shared that the Holcombs have moved to Missouri to be closer to their family, and we promised to highlight some of the many ways they have helped GHF. Here's a partial list.

--Prairie work. Steve and Sue are land stewards—often helping with burns and dealing with invasive or woody plants. With others, they have worked at a least 5 prairies in northeast KS. For many years, they managed the Roulund-Wagner Prairie at the Prairie Center.

--Office work and environmental outreach. In the 1990s, Sue worked at GHF's Roeland Park office. She kept track of paperwork and represented GHF at events. Sue took our "bison box" (an amazing collection of information about bison and Native use) to school groups and camps, and she organized and led wildflower walks.

--Newsletter. Sue was a long-time editor of the GHF newsletter. She put more years into this job than anyone else!

--Officers. Over the last two decades, Sue served many years as both GHF Secretary and President. Steve became Treasurer in 2007 and diligently kept GHF records until their move. Steve has amazing organizational skills and wrote detailed reports. Steve also filed and paid sales taxes for plant sales, managed GHF's certificates of deposit, and worked closely with Kevin Bachkora, GHF's Accountant.

--Social life and food. After hosting a bison burger cookout long ago, the Holcombs began cooking a tasty chili annual supper for the board and other volunteers.

--Storage. The Holcombs generously stored numerous boxes of GHF files, a large file cabinet, and materials for sales and exhibits at their home for many years.

--Plant sales. Sue and Steve have been heavily involved in all the sales but one (they took off for a grandchild's high school graduation). They've filled orders, printed out plant tags, tagged plants, and sent out invoices. During Covid, they worked at a "drive-in" sale and had a plant pick-up at their home. Steve and Sue were even more involved when GHF

started talking pre-orders from members. Steve developed a google form and tracked all the orders, arranged payments, and printed pull sheets.

We miss Sue and Steve but are glad they have settled into their new home. See family picture below!



Sue and Steve also wanted to share some thoughts with all the people involved with GHF: *"We've been happy to be involved in the transition of GHF from a small group mostly supporting the Prairie Center to a financially stable group with a large, involved board. We've loved seeing all the new faces and meeting hundreds if not thousands of prairie lovers."*

"Living Roots" program

On March 31, 2026, GHF participated in the celebration of the book launch of *Living Roots: the Promise of Perennial Foods* (editors Aubrey Streit Krug and Liz Carlisle). The event was a collaboration between the Lawrence Public Library, the Commons at KU, and the Land Institute. The Library invited local organizations to contribute meaningful items to a "community table" to share with attendees. GHF Program Director Kathy Denning distributed seeds from native tallgrass prairie grasses and invited attendees to examine tools constructed from parts of a bison using traditional indigenous methods as part of GHF's Bison Box educational display.



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.

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Membership ☐ \$15 Student/Retiree ☐ \$20 Friend ☐ \$35 Family ☐ \$50 Steward ☐ \$100 Sustaining
Categories: ☐ \$250 Conserver ☐ \$500 Patron ☐ \$1000 Benefactor ☐ \$5000 Founder

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

☐ 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):

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:

- ☐ Gaylord 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

THANK YOU!

To Emporia plant sale helpers: Roxie McGee and Mike Campbell, as well as Daphne Mayes and Laura Budke. Thanks to PAROC for hosting the event.

To Lawrence plant sale helpers: "super volunteers" Ann Davin and Mary Kowalski; plant taggers Laird Ingham, Carol Ingham, and Crystal Miles; order sorters Barb Schwering, Carol Schmitt, Roxie McGee, Lisa Castle, Mike Campbell, Helen Alexander, Terri Matches, and Sandy Sanders; day of sale superstars Douglas May, Mike Campbell, Terri Matches, Helen Alexander, Andrea Repinsky, Megan Withiam, Ann Simpson; and our outgoing preserve manager Nicole Stanton Wilson. Thanks to Trinity Episcopal and Mother Jenn Allen for hosting us! Also thanks to Liz Koziol for her Mycobloom table.

Welcome new members:

Jennifer Allen, Kaitlyn Ammerlaan, Fred Bellemere, Sasha Bornstein, Crystal Bradshaw-Gonzalez, Theresa Browning, Cynthia Chapo Crough, Marina DePiesse, Gabe Downey, Ginger Edholm, Matthew Falvey, Stephen Flanery, Rusty Flohrschutz, Tony Flohrschutz, Christina Gallick, Stephen Garlow,

Flohrschutz, Christina Gallick, Stephen Garlow, Whitney Goracke, Jill Haukos, Ruth Hensleigh, Anna Hines, Joyce Hodges, Salvador Iloreta, Jesse Johns, Brenda Kappelman, Jason Kingman, Stephen Lee, Bonnie Miller, Caty Movich, Lisa Neel, Patrick Olson, Anna Paradis, Corena Pendry, Cary Phillips, Tammy Silakowski, Josh Sommerfeld, Sophia Stecklein, Aime Stevens, David Toland, Amanda Torbett, Richard Trump, Emily Wagner, Sue Wasson, Diana Weaver, Anwen Williams, Verna Wright, Melanie Yoder

Welcome returning donors: Paul Showalter, Betsy Boyce, Carol Estes, Jason Kingman, Jon & Sherry Shippee, Becky & Lisa LaBlanc-Willis, Diana Perry

Special Donations

Gifts in memory of:

- Kathee Shindler:** Kellee Pratt
-**Deborah L. Ward:** Carol Lunn

Donations in honor of:

- Titus Schaad:** Lisa Neel
-**Sue and Steve Holcomb:** Katy Lange

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Katie Lamke of **The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation** reached out to GHF to share information about **bumble bees**. Of North America's ~50 species, nearly 1/4 are at-risk of extinction. Learn more at xerces.org and bumblebeeatlas.org. **Here are three ways all of us can help.**

(1) Create Pollinator Habitat. Bumble bees need places to eat, nest, and overwinter. Native plants in your garden are a huge help. Make sure the plants you select are free of pesticides (like at GHF plant sales!). Note that a newly mated queen digs herself a small hole in leaf litter, thatch, or woody understory debris in early fall. Once settled, she essentially hibernates until spring. So "Leave-the-Leaves" in fall, create a pile of debris that remains untouched through the winter, and delay garden clean up in the spring.

(2) Spread the Word: Talk to friends and family about pollinators and how they can help. Consider rallying a group to work towards becoming a certified Bee City USA or Bee Campus USA. In Kansas, Wichita is the only Bee City USA, and Dodge City Community College is the only Bee Campus USA. Let's add more to the map!



(3) Volunteer in the Bumble Bee Atlas: Help scientists study bumble bees! The Atlas is a community science project aimed at learning more about bumble bees so we can do a better job protecting them. The Atlas hosts educational training events online and in-person to provide the necessary knowledge and skills. In 2025, over 1000 people documented 37k bumblebees in 21 states! (the KS Atlas is a collaboration between Xerces Society, KS Dept. of Wildlife and Parks, US Fish and Wildlife Service).