

Northern Mesic Tallgrass Prairie

Site Characteristics: Stands of this community occur on flat to rolling topography and on floodplains adjacent to streams where the water table is within reach of plant roots. This community occurs on black, friable, organic-rich soils that have surface horizons high in bases. During the warm season, soils are intermittently dry for long periods or have subsurface horizons in which salts or carbonates have accumulated. Soils are generally finer-textured (clay loams), although soil texture can range from clay loams to sands. Soils are generally fertile, deep, slightly acidic, and moderately to well-drained. Soil moisture is generally mesic, although it can vary from dry-mesic to wet-mesic. In glacial lakeplains soils tend to be more poorly drained.

Vegetation Characteristics: This is a grassland community with dense vegetation dominated by tall grasses. Forbs are abundant (>60% cover) and often have high local diversity. Clumps of trees and tall brush can often be found along the boundary between wetlands and this community. Otherwise, woody vegetation is rare. Big bluestem, Prairie Dropseed, Porcupine Grass, and occasionally Indian Grass, are the most abundant species in this community.

Range: Northwestern Iowa (CRA 102C.1, 107A.1)

Conservation Status: G2 - Imperiled

Management Considerations: Over-grazing can change a tallgrass prairie site to a mixed grass and, eventually, a shortgrass prairie. Heavy summer grazing is especially hard on warm season tallgrass species. In such cases, introduced bluegrass species and weedy herbs often replace the tall grasses. Fire is important to maintain the grassland from invading woody vegetation and maintaining species diversity.

Iowa NRCS Plant Community Description

This community description is a compilation of the Community Association and its over-riding Community Alliance descriptions as provided by NatureServe (www.natureserve.org/explorer). Where necessary, community descriptions were adapted as recommended by Iowa plant community experts.

3/18/2009

NORTHERN MESIC TALLGRASS PRAIRIE						
SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STRATA	FUNCTIONAL GROUP	IA CofC	SEEDS/LB	STATE STATUS
<i>Amorpha canescens</i>	Lead plant	Shrub Layer	SUB-SHRUB, LEGUME	8	256000	
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	Big bluestem	Herbaceous Layer, Dominant	P-GRASS, WARM SEASON	4	160000	
<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	Side-oats grama	Herbaceous Layer	P-GRASS, WARM SEASON	6	96000	
<i>Echinacea pallida</i>	Pale coneflower	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	7	83200	
<i>Galium boreale</i>	Northern bedstraw	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	7	1120000	
<i>Helianthus grosseserratus</i>	Saw-tooth sunflower	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	4	240000	
<i>Hesperostipa spartea</i>	Porcupine grass	Herbaceous Layer, Dominant	P-GRASS, COOL SEASON	6	10880	
<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	June grass	Herbaceous Layer	P-GRASS, COOL SEASON	7	3200000	
<i>Liatris pycnostachya</i>	Prairie blazing star	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	6	176000	
<i>Opuntia humifusa</i>	Eastern prickly pear	Herbaceous Layer	SHRUB	8	22400	
<i>Oxalis violacea</i>	Violet wood sorrel	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	7	800000	
<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	Switchgrass	Herbaceous Layer	P-GRASS, WARM SEASON	5	224000	
<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>	Western wheatgrass	Herbaceous Layer	P-GRASS, COOL SEASON	2	115008	
<i>Phemeranthus parviflorus</i>	Prairie fameflower	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	10		T
<i>Phlox pilosa</i>	Prairie phlox	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	7	304000	
<i>Prenanthes aspera</i>	Rough white lettuce	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	9	224000	
<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	Bur oak	Canopy, Associate	TREE	4	64	
<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	Gray-headed coneflower	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	4	672000	
<i>Rhus spp</i>	Sumac	Shrub Layer	SHRUB			
<i>Schedonnardus paniculatus</i>	Tumblegrass	Herbaceous Layer	A-GRASS, WARM SEASON	0		SC
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	Little bluestem	Herbaceous Layer	P-GRASS, WARM SEASON	5	240000	
<i>Selaginella rupestris</i>	Rock spikemoss	Herbaceous Layer	FERN	6		SC
<i>Silphium laciniatum</i>	Compass plant	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	7	19200	
<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	Tall goldenrod	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	0	4600000	
<i>Solidago spp.</i>	Goldenrod	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB			
<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	Indian grass	Herbaceous Layer, Dominant	P-GRASS, WARM SEASON	4	192000	
<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>	Prairie dropseed	Herbaceous Layer, Dominant	P-GRASS, WARM SEASON	9	256000	

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SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	STRATA	FUNCTIONAL GROUP	IA CofC	SEEDS/ LB	STATE STATUS
<i>Symphoricarpos occidentalis</i>	Wolfberry, buckbrush	Shrub Layer	SHRUB	0	75033	
<i>Symphyotrichum ericoides</i>	Heath aster, frost weed	Herbaceous Layer	P-FORB	3	3200000	

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