

The City of Davenport, like many cities across the nation, has for many years recognized the values associated with using native plant materials in its landscapes. Recognizing that value, the City has used native plants in many areas throughout the city, including rain gardens, bioretention cells, and prairies.

Native plants play a significant role in helping the City reduce its environmental impact by reducing water runoff, stabilizing soils, and reducing the emissions and labor costs associated with maintaining more traditional plant materials such as grass.

Native plants can be used in a variety of settings, and their natural, low maintenance beauty provides a habitat for a variety of animals and aquatic species.

Native plant materials have been used at the following locations for very specific and meaningful purposes, which not only benefit the environment but also the citizens of Davenport:

- 46th Street bio-cells between Eastern and Jersey Ridge
- Centennial Park prairie
- City Hall parking lot
- Davenport Public Works parking lot bio-cells
- Duck Creek streambank (various)
- Duck Creek Golf Course
- Eastern Avenue Library
- Eastern Avenue Park
- Fairmount wetlands
- Fairmount Library
- Hobart prairie, Eagles Watch Drive
- Junge Park
- Lakehurst bioswale
- Littig detention basin
- North High School rain gardens on 53rd Street
- Prairie Heights Park
- Prospect Drive
- Putnam Hill
- Redhawk Golf Course
- River Heritage Park
- Sunderbruch Park prairie
- Wisconsin and Silver Creek prairie
- 30+ (and growing) private native planting areas throughout the city

With the installation of native plant materials comes the need for conducting controlled, or prescribed, burns. These burns are designed to help promote the health of established native plant materials by controlling the spread of invasive, non-native vegetation.

Below: Duck Creek at Junge Park streambank stabilization before and after



Below: Lakehurst bioswale drainage issue resolution, before and after



If you have any questions, please contact  
**Public Works Natural Resources at 563.326.7923.**

## Maintenance of Native Plants

**Native plants require fire.** If you want to encourage native plants, you must re-establish the ecological conditions under which they evolved in the ecosystem. The key to re-establishing those conditions is a pattern of regular burning.

As native plant communities evolved, they were subjected to regular fires from the lightning that occurred during dry periods. Later, native Americans deliberately set fires in prairies and savannas to help them hunt, to increase their visibility, to see those approaching their camps, and to encourage growth of herbs and medicinal plants. Over thousands of years, these native plant communities have adapted to this periodic fire.

Below: Picture of controlled burn of native prairie at Centennial Park



Native plants have adapted over time to respond to regular burning by growing and reproducing more vigorously. If there is no fire, invasive brush species can shade out these native plants. When burns happen regularly, the plants' genetic memory helps them outcompete exotic weeds. That's why controlled burns are important for creating and maintaining natural landscapes.

Of course, you must do it safely, and in the right manner.

## Controlled, or Prescribed, Burns and Safety

The City of Davenport follows industry standards for prescribed burn planning and safety. Our staff is trained to conduct controlled burns. Additionally, burns are conducted only when weather conditions permit a safe burn. Generally, conditions for conducting controlled burns occur between the middle of February and the middle of May, and between the middle of October and the middle of November.

The City attempts to burn only on days when wind conditions are predicted to be low or when wind will carry smoke away from occupied buildings. Closeness of some buildings to burn areas may mean that smoke will be present and may enter buildings despite best efforts to prevent it. It is recommended that persons with smoke allergies or asthma keep their windows closed during the burn period and for several hours afterwards. These persons may also wish to leave their homes, if they are able, during the burn to avoid smoke inhalation.

To help inform the public when burns are being conducted, signs will be posted on roads adjacent to areas to be burned the afternoon before a burn is scheduled.



You can find more information on native plant maintenance and prescribed burns by visiting Iowa State University's Extension and Outreach website ([naturalresources.extension.iastate.edu](http://naturalresources.extension.iastate.edu)), click on **Encyclopedia**, then click on **Prescribed Fire**.