



Princess Point

Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savannah Plant Communities



A **tallgrass prairie** is a treeless plant community dominated by wildflowers and sun-loving grasses that can grow over 5ft tall.



An **oak savannah** is a rare plant community of scattered oak trees above a layer of prairie grasses and wildflowers with few shrubs.

Princess Point is a place where people come to gather. From indigenous peoples to visitors today, human presence has influenced how the plant community has developed here over time.

The plants found at Princess Point are indicative of rare **tallgrass prairie** and **oak savannah** ecosystems. These unique terrestrial ecosystems typically develop on sites with dry, sandy soils and rely on natural disturbances such as fire, drought and grazing to thrive. Royal Botanical Gardens' ongoing conservation efforts to improve plant, insect, bird, and mammal biodiversity at Princess Point have created a place where people can come and experience an extraordinary natural paradise where native plants take center stage.



Prairie and Savannah plants found at Princess Point clockwise from top left: Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Smooth aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*), False Sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*), Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), Showy Tick-trefoil (*Desmodium canadense*); Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*); Hoary Vervain (*Verbena stricta*); Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*).



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COOTES PARADISE

Prairie Under Pressure

More than 20 years ago, Princess Point was nothing more than a field of invasive turf grass. Unfortunately, the invasive grasses persist today aided by trampling of visitors. Native plants cannot withstand heavy foot traffic, unlike invasive turf grass, therefore creating more space for turf to spread.



Invasive Species found at Princess Point

- Non-native grasses such as Woodland Speargrass, Fescues and Kentucky Bluegrass
- Ornamental Honeysuckles
- Common Buckthorn
- Garlic Mustard
- Dog Strangling Vine
- Oriental Bittersweet
- Burning Bush and Spindle Tree
- Common and Japanese Barberry
- Multiflora Rose



Native plants are pushed out due to trampling. Turf grass exists where native plants should.

One of the best traditional ways to manage turf grass and other invasive species in a native prairie is through **controlled burning**. By “prescribing fire” in the early spring the native grasses are unharmed as they are still dormant but turf grasses and other invasive species have begun to green up and are susceptible to the burn. The fire knocks back their growth – providing space and open ground for the native plants at Princess Point to thrive.



RBG volunteer Chad removes an ornamental Honeysuckle shrub.

Visit our [volunteer page](#) to get involved.

Tallgrass Prairie Plants and Their Root Systems

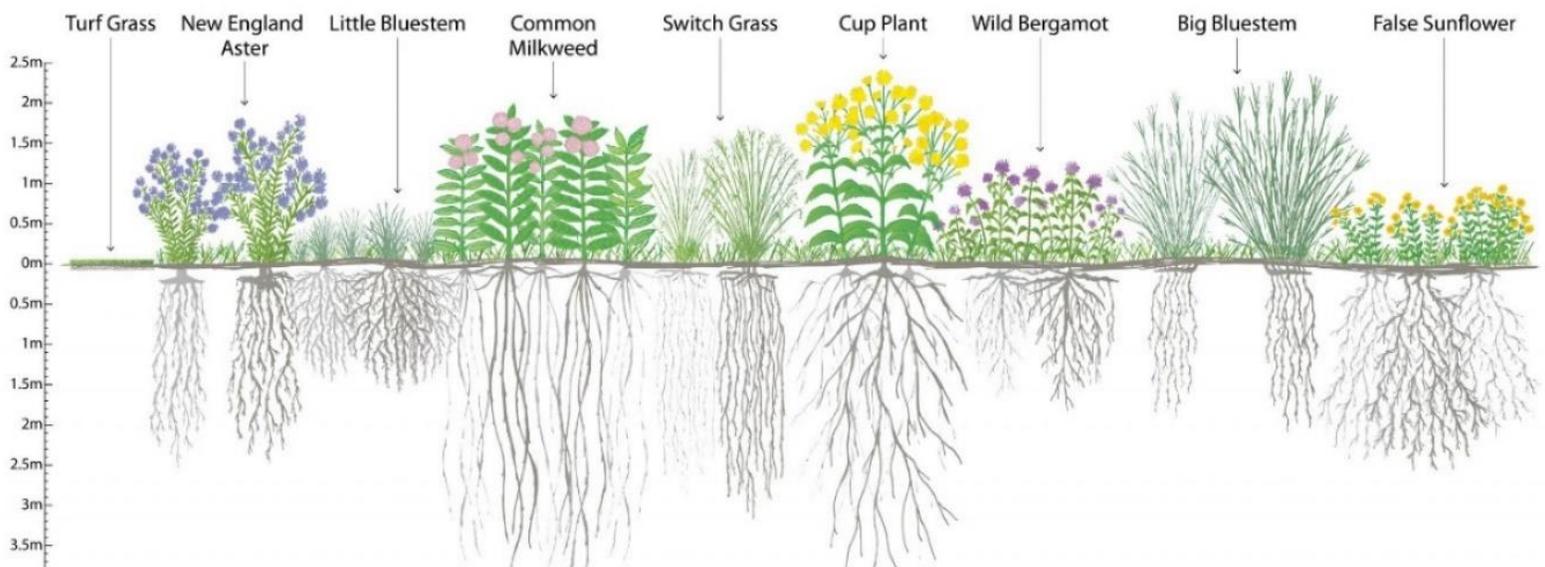


Photo accreditation courtesy of Toronto Region and Conservation Authority

Native grassland plants have extensive root systems that can extend into the ground 2-3 times their height. These plants are resilient to drought, fire and grazing. The plentiful plant growth above ground provides insects, birds and wildlife with nesting material, food, pollen, nectar, and a place to hide from predators.