

JULY ALONG



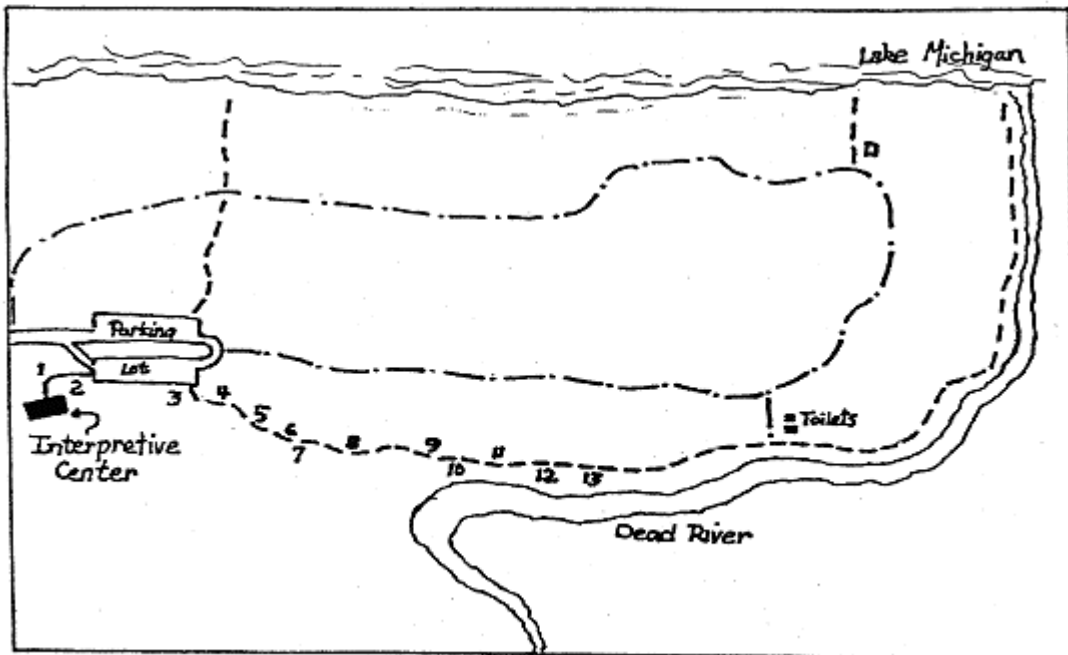
DEAD RIVER

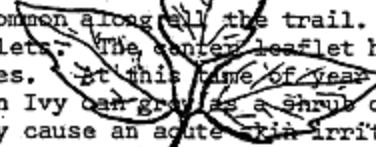
Illinois Beach State Park

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This leaflet is a guide to the wild flowers, trees, and shrubs that are in bloom or are of particular interest in late May and early June.

Stops are shown by numbers on the map and by corresponding numbered posts along the trail. There is a brief description of the flowering plants at each stop. Further information may be found in the book: Plants of the Illinois Dunesland by Elizabeth Lunn.



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1. POISON IVY is common along all the trail. The leaf is divided into three leaflets. The center leaflet has a longer stem than the two side ones. At this time of year the yellow berries are forming. Poison Ivy can grow as a shrub or a vine. All parts of the plant may cause an acute skin irritation. DO NOT TOUCH!

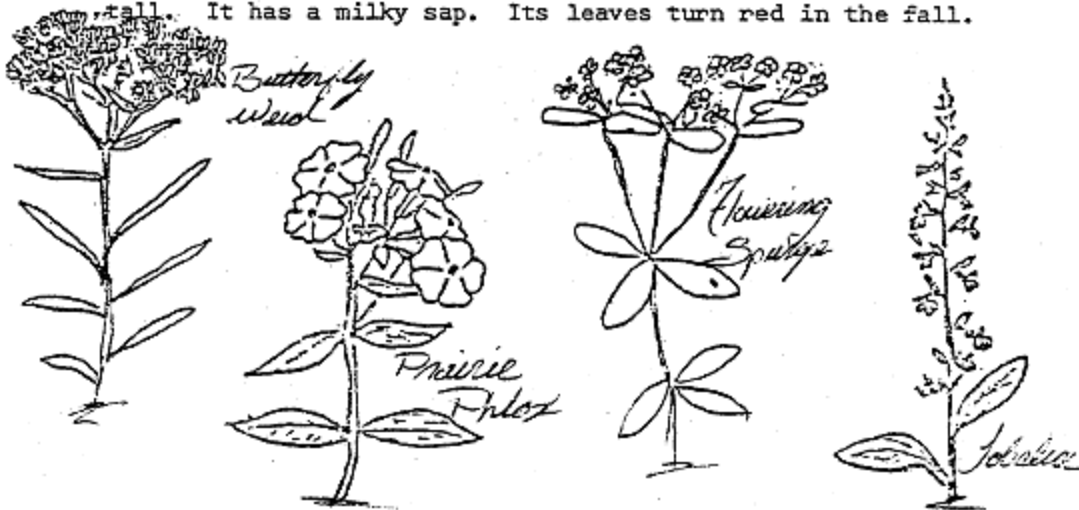
The vine with the big maple-like leaves is a WILD GRAPE. The small, dark blue fruit ripens in September. It makes excellent jam or jelly.

The bright orange flowers that you see in many places at this time of year is BUTTERFLY WEED. It is not a weed, but a member of the Milkweed family and one of the specialties of the Park. Butterflies are often seen on it.

2. PRAIRIE PHLOX is the rose-pink, 5 petaled flower common along the trail. Marsh Phlox is very similar but has a smoother stem and narrower leaves. It blooms slightly later than Prairie Phlox and prefers a more moist soil. You may see it in late July.

The dainty, pale blue flower on a slender stem is PALE-SPIKED LOBELIA.

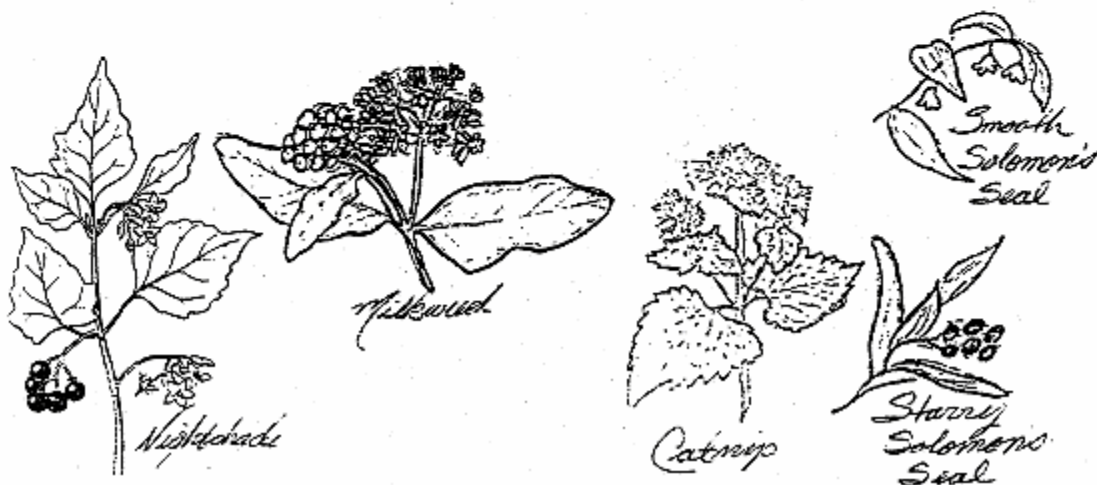
FLOWERING SPURGE is common in many environments in July. It is the leafy plant with many small white flowers, often 2 or 3 ft. tall. It has a milky sap. Its leaves turn red in the fall.



3. The entrance to Dead River Trail is a disturbed area with many non-native (weed) plants. Among the weeds, identify two kinds of thistles. CANADA (Field) THISTLE with narrow, darkgreen bristly leaves and PLUMLESS THISTLE with broad, whitish-green bristly leaves. It is a recent invader. Note also CATNIP with broad, triangular leaves. Smell a crushed leaf. The short grass, starting to turn brown is DOWNY BROME, a pernicious weed in the west where it is crowding out the native, more nutritious grasses on which cattle feed. Beyond the grass there is a common weed of gardens, bush and fence rows. It is BITTERSWEET NIGHTSHADE. It has a purple flower and later in the season red berries which are poisonous.

Close to the weeds that are several COMMON MILKWEED plants. Note the unusual construction of the individual flowers and their sweet perfume. Milkweed is not a weed.

As you leave the "weed patch" you will find some of our native plants. At the base of the oak tree on the right look for the two kinds of Solomon's Seals. STARRY SOLOMON'S SEAL is the more common. It has a short spike of small white flowers earlier in the season and dark red striped fruit in July. SMOOTH SOLOMON'S SEAL has greenish white flowers hanging down in groups of 2-10 along the under side of the stem.



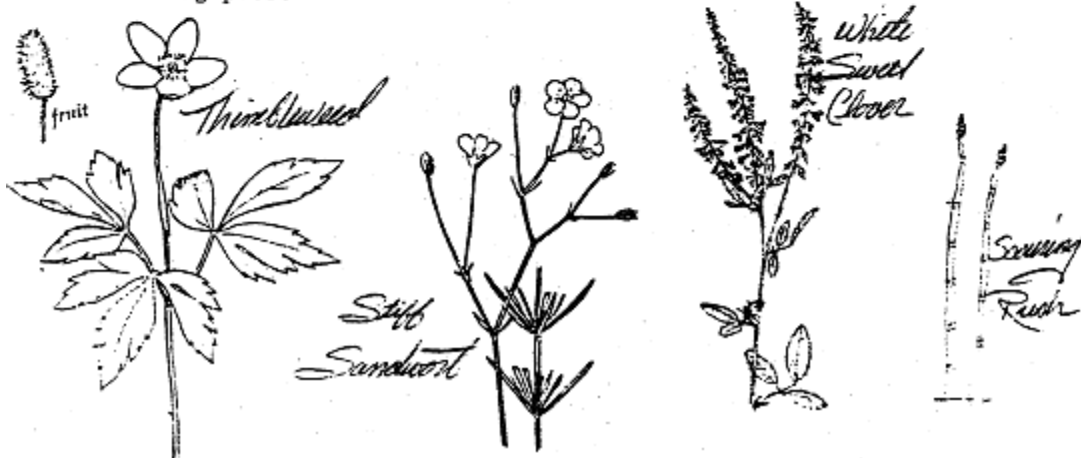
5. JUNE GRASS is up to 2 ft. tall with a dense, silvery upright panicle. It is a native grass of oak woods and dry prairie. Look for it along the trail in dry locations.

Watch for THIMBLEWEED along the dry edge of the trail. It is one of the anemones. Its white flower soon forms a cylindrical fruiting head, only slightly resembling a thimble. Meadow Anemone is similar. It is found in moist soil along the right side of the trail near post #'s 9 & 10.

6. The large, much branched plant common along the trail at this point is WHITE SWEET CLOVER. It is one of our most common weeds. It was introduced from Asia and is sometimes used as a forage crop. If not eradicated it takes over the prairie, crowding out our native species.

There are two small white flowers, now almost through blooming that are often confused. The 4-petaled one on an almost leafless stem is SAND CRESS. The 5-petaled one, growing in low mats is STIFF SANDWORT. Both may be found a several locations along the trail.

Find the jointed stems of SCOURING RUSH among the grass near the path. These plants are ancient relatives of ferns and thus do not bear flowers. At the apex of each stem note the spore-bearing cones. The cells of the stem contain silicon which makes the stem gritty, thus useful to the peioneers for scouring pots.



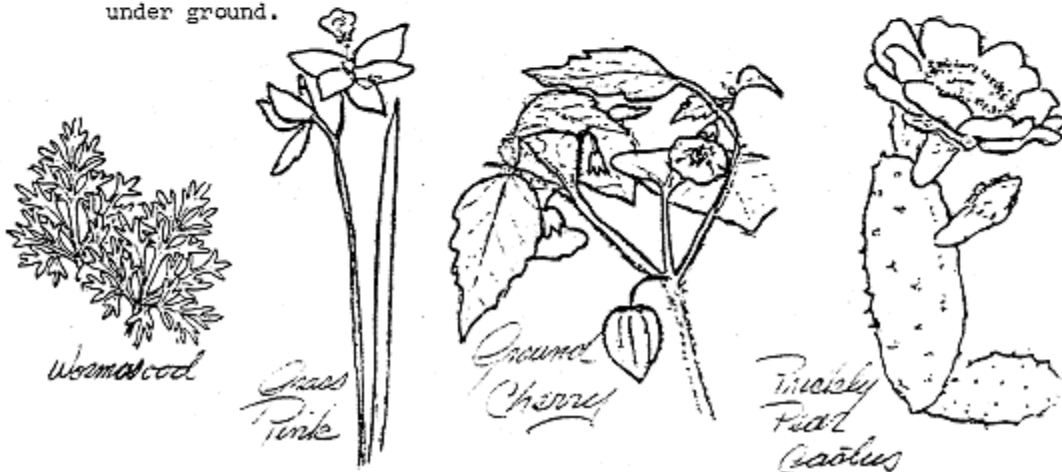
7. At the base of the post there is a soft, gray-green WORMWOOD plant in its first year. Wormwood is considered a pioneer plant because it can live in barren and difficult environments.

At a little distance on both sides of the trail you will see GRASS PINKS. They are orchids and among the most beautiful and rare plants in the Park.

Under the foliage at the left edge of the path you will find the yellow, dark-centered bell-shaped flowers of GROUND CHERRY. In spite of its name this is not a true cherry. Late in the season the flowers form yellowish-green "Japanese Lantern". A relative is cultivated in gardens. It is larger with orange lanterns.

8. PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS is one of the most unexpected plants in the Park. It is a native, that is, it was not planted here. It is found in dry sandy prairie and along the dry edges of the oak woods. Note the jointed pads with tufts of bristles. Look for the large flower buds in late June and the large shiny yellow flowers in July. There are several specimens nearby, hidden in the grass.

Behind the post and also a little south and west of it find a small woody plant with many gray-green leaflets and small purple pea-like flowers. This is LEAD PLANT. It got its name from the belief held by early settlers that it indicated lead under ground.



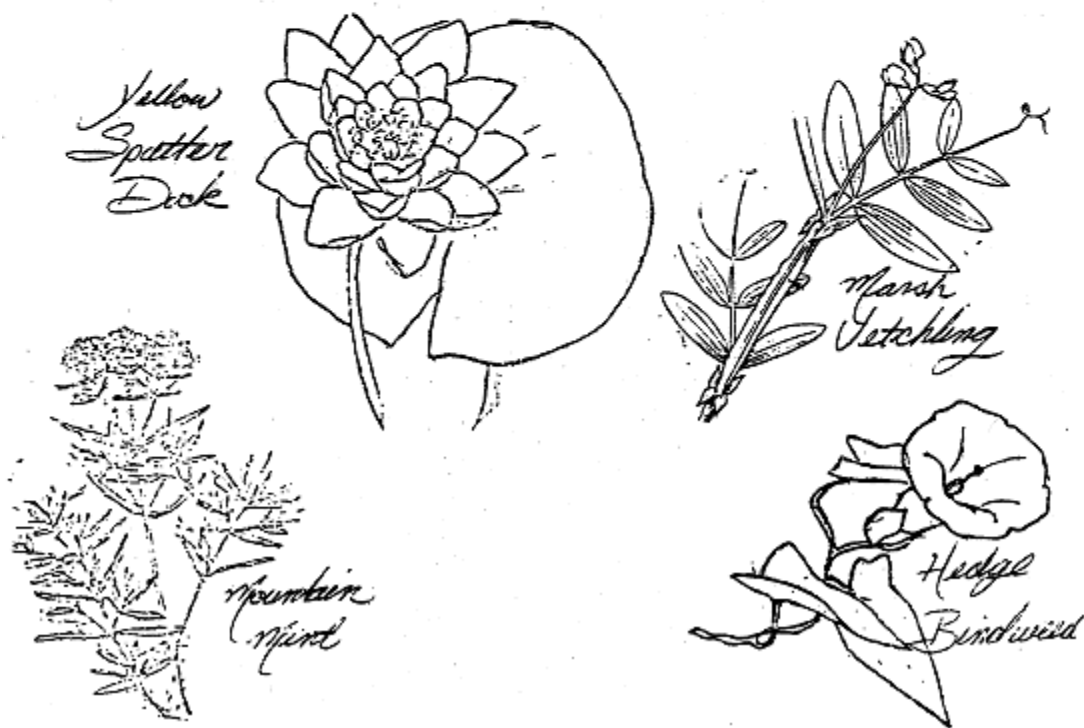
10. As you approach post 10 identify the dense growth of MOUNTAIN MINT along the west side of the trail. It has very small white flowers. Crush a leaf to note its fresh mint smell.

Climp the observation platform for a good view of Dead River, "dead" only when a sand bar across its mouth prevents drainage into Lake Michigan. Look for white WATER LILIES and YELLOW SPATTER DOCK.

At the base of the platform note the sword-like leaves of WILD IRIS (Blue Flag). It blooms in June.

The large morning-glory-like flowers are HEDGE BINDWEED.

Another vine near here is MARSH VETCHLING. It has small, pea-like rose-purple flowers and many small leaflets. It is often hidden, twined around other plants.



11. You have probably noticed several ASPARAGUS plants as you walked along the trail. Look at the one near the post, noting its fine, almost fern-like leaves and its berries. This is the same species that we eat in its younger stage.

The plant with the small, daisy-like flowers is FLEABANE. Note that the white or pale pink rays are thinner and more numerous than those of the daisies and asters.

On the west side of the trail you will find a field of BLACK-EYED SUSANS.

There are two big ant hills just to the right of the path, one, near the post is fairly new. Note that the ants are using wood chips to "roof" their colony. The other one is several yards south of the new one. It is an old hill that is now being rebuilt. What was the old "roof" made of? Can you find the doors to the colonies?



9. Not far from this post there are two native prairie grasses. The slender curved one, already mentioned, is PORCUPINE GRASS. Gently pull out a seed. Feel its very sharp point and note the long, bent awn (hair) projecting from the top. The seed is barbed, when it falls to the ground and there as a result of changing moisture the whole seed twists itself into the ground. Unfortunately the same thing may happen if the seed comes in contact with the tender skin around the eyes, nose, and mouth of grazing animals in the west.

The long, bright green leaves of CORD GRASS are frequent along both sides of the path. Rub your hand gently up and down a leaf. Which way do the bristles on the edges of the leaf point? Cord Grass bloom in August and September.

The post is close to a JUNE BERRY (Service Berry) tree. It has many dark blue berries, loved by birds and relished also by man.



12. The SCOTCH PINES which you see along the trail have spread from plantings made about 1880 farther south in the Park. They are not typical of a prairie. The slightly twisted needles are about 2 in. long. Can you see how many needles are in a sheath? The upper trunk of old trees is orange.

WILD MADDER, a relative of bedstraw, is a weak-stemmed plant common along the path near the post. Note the tiny whorled leaves and numerous small white flowers.

13. BLACK OAK is the most common tree in the woods between the trail and the dunes. In this sandy soil it never becomes very large. Its lobes end in bristles, where as the BUR OAK, near the post, lacks bristles on its rounded lobes. Its twigs sometimes have corky extensions.

Look to the southwest to find one of the strangest plants in the prairie. It is RATTLESNAKE MASTER. The white flowers are in button-like heads. Note the long parallel-beined leaves with stiff spiny edges.

Several yards to the west of the path there is a bright orange PRAIRIE LILY, a rather rare plant in the Park.



4. As you walk the trail notice the wild roses. **EASLY WILD ROSE** has no thorns except on the lower part of the stem and these are more like bristles than thorns. **PRAIRIE ROSE** has many sharp thorns and glandular hairs below the petals. Early Wild Rose blooms in June and early July. Prairie Rose in July and late summer.

Look to the east (your left as you walk along the trail) and observe the sand ridges and low, often moist hollows. The sand ridges were formed by wave action thousands of years ago as the level of the lake dropped due to the changing drainage pattern.

The bright blue flowers, common in the prairie, is **SPIDERWORT**. It has long, grass-like leaves and a cluster of buds under the flower in bloom. Each flower last only a day and is followed by one of the buds which opens the next day.

The abundant yellow 5-petaled flower seen along the trail is **HAIKY PUCCOON**, a close relative of Hoary Puccoon seen earlier in the spring. Rub your hand gently over a Hairy Puccoon to note its harsh feel as contrasted with the velvety feel of the Hoary Puccoon.



Early Wild Rose



Spiderwort



Hairy Puccoon