

Assiniboine Forest News

Fall/Winter 2010

Urban Green Team 2010



A huge Thank-You goes out to this year's Urban Green Team members; Shauna Sawich, Jordon Baril, Kayla Funk, and returning member Corey Thompson, for all of their hard work!

The team battled with unusually wet conditions that made many trails impassable for a large portion of the season, and significantly increased the need for repairs to heavy-use areas. Corduroy bridges were constructed in a number of locations throughout the forest to help improve accessibility through wet areas, and reduce damage to the trails.

In addition to general maintenance activities, a large section of the Yellow Trail was wood chipped this year, with plans to finish the remaining portion in 2011 (See map on other side).

Prairie Sampling Plots Established

This summer the City of Winnipeg Naturalist Services Branch established permanent vegetation sampling plots in the sections of prairie closest to the main entrance of the forest at Grant Ave and Chalfont. These sampling plots are marked with orange metal stakes and will be used to monitor plant species abundance and diversity, as well as the effects of fire on these attributes.

Controlled burns have been conducted at Assiniboine Forest to renew the health of the grassland areas by burning off the accumulated dead grass, the "duff layer". By removing the duff layer, new seedlings have greater exposure to light and species diversity generally increases because of reduced competition.

Only portions of the prairie are burned at any one time so that habitat resources are still available nearby for forest wildlife. Burns are conducted in prairie habitats across the city rotationally, in both the spring and the fall.

These new sample plots will allow researchers to monitor the effectiveness of their management techniques, and changes to ecosystem health over time.

Keep your eyes open in the spring for rare prairie plants that may appear after a burn.



What's New?



Two new park benches have been donated and installed this year; one on the Preston Trail mound overlooking the East Wetland, and the other is located close to the new trailhead sign at the Southwest corner of the forest along the Harte Trail. The trailhead sign for the Harte Trail extension running along the Southern border of Assiniboine Forest is scheduled to be completed in the coming year.

Over the past couple of years, both the Preston Trail mound, and the mound along the light blue trail (See map on other side) have been undergoing preparations for seeding with indigenous prairie grasses by Native Plant Solutions, a subsidiary of Ducks Unlimited Canada. Both mounds are now ready to be seeded in the spring of 2011.

Fall Colors by Doug Ross

After digging around in the archives of the Living Prairie Museum's newsletter 'Prairie Breeze', we came across a great article written by one of the first interpreters at Living Prairie Museum, Doug Ross. The following article answers a question that we are often asked this time of year:

"Why do leaves change colour?"

*Reprinted from Prairie Breeze
September 1980, vol 1. no. 9*

September is the month when the trees begin to turn brilliant colours for fall. Green gives way to various hues of yellow and red, and the woodlands put on a final colour spectacle before their leaves finally fall to the ground. Why do the leaves turn colour before the fall, and why are the colours so different?

The answers lie in the various colours or pigments which are present in the leaves. During the summer when the tree is actively growing, one colour, green is all that can be seen. This is because the green is produced by the chlorophyll in the leaves, which is used in food production. But green is not the only colour in the leaves. Yellow and red pigments exist as well.

In the fall, the cool weather and shorter days slow down the production of chlorophyll. As the amount of green chlorophyll decreases in the leaves the other colours become more prominent. Most trees either turn yellow or red in the fall, depending on whether they have more red or yellow pigments. For example, aspens (poplar) turn a soft yellow colour as they have yellow pigments (called carotene and xanthophyll.)

Other trees such as the maple turn a brilliant red due to the presence of a red pigment called anthocyanin. This red pigment is increased when more sugars are present in the leaves, and more sugars are produced by the trees when the nights are cool and the days sunny. Hence, when the weather is right the leaves are a more brilliant red.

Don't be surprised if the colours for the same trees are not all the same. You might see some bright red aspens when you thought they would be yellow, or yellow maples when you thought they would be red. This is due to the genetic make-up of the tree. Just as some people have dark hair and some are blond, so the trees sometimes differ in their pigmentation.

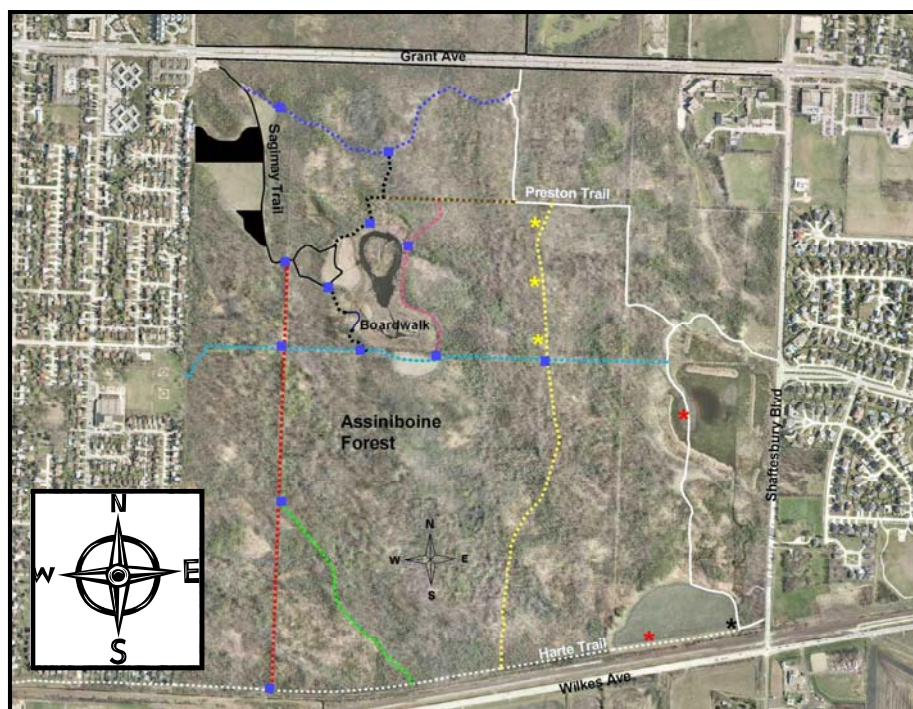
In nature there are always exceptions to the rules. When the frosts finally arrive the colouration processes are stopped, and the leaves blacken, and fall off. So lets hope for a long warm fall and beautiful colours.

Some trees and their dominant colours:

Poplar – Yellow
Oak – Yellow/Brown
Ash – Yellow/Purple
Cranberry – Red
Maple – Red
Dogwood – Maroon
Hawthorn – Red
Poison Ivy – Red
Chokecherry – Red/Orange



Assiniboine Forest Map 2010



-  **New Section of Wood Chipped Trail**
-  **New Benches**
-  **New Trail-Head Sign**
-  **Blue Bins for Dog-Waste Disposal**
-  **Prescribed Burn Area 2010**