

# **Restoring Prairie in Your Landscape with Native Grasses to Support Native Lepidoptera**

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Today, less than 1% of the tall grass prairie that once dominated the Minnesota landscape remains. Gone with the prairies are the many ecological benefits they provide. One of the most important of the ecological benefits native grasses offer is to provide habitat and a reliable food source for songbirds, native bees, and many species of native butterflies and moths.



Photo by Elizabeth Carls

Native grasses are an essential food source for the larvae of many Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). They also serve as nest building sites, and offer protection from predators for both the larvae and the adults. There are currently a dozen species of prairie-dependent Lepidoptera on the Minnesota List of Endangered, Threatened, and

Special Concern Species which identifies species that are at risk of disappearing from the state. This is a direct result of habitat loss.



Photo by Mary Meyer

In addition to providing necessary habitat, native grasses, with their deep, annually renewing root systems minimize soil erosion and increase the amount of organic matter available in the landscape. They are drought tolerant with a low water requirement, and require no supplemental nutrients. They are also virtually pest-free, requiring no pesticides.

Native grasses play an integral role in our landscapes and in the survival of our prairie-dependent butterflies and moths. By planting native grasses in our rural and urban landscapes we can once again reap their many ecological benefits, and support our native Lepidoptera.