

Blue flag irises, swamp milkweed, blazing stars, rattlesnake master, New England aster and many other native flowers bloom at Van Vlissingen Prairie, also known as the Marian R. Byrnes Natural Area. This is one of the few prairies **1** within the city that is not a complete start-from-scratch restoration; some of the prairie matrix was already in place when the City of Chicago acquired the land from the Beltway Railroad corporation in 2002.

Despite the name, part of Van Vlissingen Prairie is wooded **3**, and much of it is wet. The prairie's wetter portions provide significant habitat for birds, including American bitterns and Wilson's phalaropes during migration.

In some sections of Van Vlissingen, the soil is scraped away or covered with fill. Two to three inches under the soil surface is a bluish-colored sand. (It's not toxic, but it is fill material.) Thin soil and dry conditions have stunted the growth of

prairie plants in these areas, and it's not unusual to see liatris and switchgrass blooming on stalks only one to two-feet high.

Because the prairie has gone for years without prescribed burns, many trees and shrubs are present. *Phragmites* has taken over some sections of the prairie. Over the coming years, ecological restoration work is expected to greatly improve the quality of this site. The area with the highest quality plants was imported from another site; a prairie that was about to be destroyed in Bedford Park was dug up with its root system and soil microorganisms kept as intact as possible, and was re-established at Van Vlissingen.

Van Vlissingen is part of the Calumet Open Space Reserve.

VAN VLISSINGEN PRAIRIE

Site No 82



9900 SOUTH / 1900 EAST



Van Vlissingen Prairie

N: 82



ADDRESS 9900 S Van Vlissingen Rd
 OWNER City of Chicago
 ACREAGE 133.23

HABITATS
1 2 Wetland
3 Forest / Woodland

DIRECTIONS From 95th Street, go south on Jeffrey Avenue, then turn right on 97th Street. Park near the alley behind Van Vlissingen Road and enter at the sign.

Van Vlissingen Prairie

Chicago Habitat Directory 2005