

BURN

will help UWM prairie bloom



UW-M's grass prairie along Downer Avenue just east of the Klotsche Center was treated to a controlled burn April 21.

Periodic burning is necessary for soil and invasive species management, according to Kate Nelson, UWM environmental sustainability coordinator.

"A prairie is an endangered Wisconsin ecosystem dependent on maintenance by wildfire," Nelson says. "Controlled fires enrich the soil, release seed banks, and kill certain weeds and invading woody plants."

Controlled burns also allow diverse local plant and animal communities to thrive. "When fire is suppressed," Nelson says, "these communities are replaced with a smaller number of species, most of which are common, widespread and non-native."

The burn was conducted by EcoTone, a UWM student organization, under the supervision of UWM Buildings and Grounds crew and Marlin Johnson, UW-Waukesha Field Station manager. The Milwaukee Fire Department stood by just in case.

Nearby trees were sprayed with water before the burn to prevent singeing, and the charred grasses were sprayed afterward to make sure the fire was completely extinguished.

The Buildings and Grounds Department and student organizations began establishing native gardens around campus about 10 years ago. At 3,500 square feet, the Downer Avenue prairie is the largest. Smaller campus prairies are found near the Kunkle Center and south of the Architecture and Urban Planning building. A rain garden near Sabin Hall captures that building's rainwater runoff.

UWM photographer Peter Jakubowski captured these highlights of the burn.

