



# Lindberg Park, Field Park & Austin Gardens Prescribed Burn Fact Sheet

*An Initiative of the Park District of Oak Park's Greening Advisory Committee*

## Project Summary

In the late winter/early spring (March - April) or in late fall (Oct-Nov) the Park District of Oak Park may conduct a prescribed burn of the Lindberg Park prairie trial gardens, the Field Park natural area (in the southwest corner of the park) and/or the Austin Gardens wildflower area for the purpose of improving the health of the plantings and educating the community about the role fire plays in maintaining the health of native plant communities such as prairie, savanna, and woodland.

The prescribed burns will be conducted by certified staff and volunteers with the Oak Park Fire Department on site for the duration of the burn. The areas immediately surrounding the areas will be closed to the public, however the public is invited to observe from a safe distance. The Park District anticipates the closure of the area surrounding the trial gardens and the native area for approximately an hour preceding the prescribed burn and will re-open immediately upon the cessation of each prescribed burn.

Conducting a prescribed burn is weather dependent and will only occur within the parameters for wind speed, wind direction, and relative humidity. Snow or ice cover and moisture level of the dead vegetation are also considered.

Required permits from the IL Environmental Protection Agency and Cook County Department of Environmental Control will be obtained. These permits require public notification.

The introduction of prescribed fire is the first step in improving the health and beauty of these natural areas.

## Fire & Native Plant Communities

All native plant communities of northeastern Illinois - wetland, woodland, savanna, and prairie - require regular fire to remain healthy. Historically these ecosystems burned due to anthropogenic (human caused) and natural (lightning) reasons. In the absence of fire, these communities lose their balance and become unhealthy. Coupled with the introduction of non-native plant species, native plant communities, along with the birds and butterflies that depend on them, are lost.

Many non-native species did not evolve with regular fire. As a result, prescribed fire is one tool for controlling the spread of them. After outright destruction to roads, buildings, farms, etc. the invasion by non-native species is the greatest threat to native plant communities.

The Lindberg Prairie Trial Gardens constitute a prairie reconstruction and therefore requires occasional fire to succeed. Many non-native plant species are present. The Field Park natural area and the Austin Gardens wildflower area will also benefit from a prescribed burn.

## How Do You Control a Burn?

The ground surrounding the burn areas is either inflammable sidewalk or green grass. Burn crew members will be stationed along a perimeter with water tanks and flappers in the event fire creeps outward from the burn unit. More details regarding the procedures and benefits of a prescribed burn are available on the Park District website at [pdop.org](http://pdop.org).

## Greening Advisory Committee

This project is an initiative of the Park District of Oak Park's Greening Advisory Committee. The committee is made up of citizen volunteers and Park District staff members who monitor and contribute to the Park District's environmental activities and oversee the implementation of the PDOP's Environmental Policy. For more information on this committee, contact Scott Stewart at (708) 725-2450 or [scott.stewart@pdop.org](mailto:scott.stewart@pdop.org).



**FOR OUR PARKS. FOR OUR PLANET.**

---

*In partnership with the community, we enrich lives by providing meaningful experiences through programs, parks and facilities.*