

Prairie Dock *Silphium terebinthinaceum*

Prairie Dock is one of the tallest plants of the Midwest grass prairie. The leaves are an impressive size and shape with a life cycle of bright green turning to various browns as the plant curls up into itself all the while developing a deep taproot.

It appeared in my tall grass prairie restoration project three years after being seeded. Large leaves make a huge rosette from which a long stem and round bud develops into a small sunflower. I discovered I could preserve the leaves and show them through their full growing cycle.

Although my restoration project was in southwest Michigan the Prairie Dock plant became a symbol of the beauty and power of our original tall grass prairie.

“What a thousand acres of silphiums looked like when they tickled the bellies of the buffalo is a question never to again to be answered...” Aldo Leopold