

# School-to-Nature



## Cup Plant

Cup Plant is a prairie wildflower that can be found on Conservancy lands at Trout Ponds Prairie. This unusual plant gets its name because the plant's sturdy leaves grow on four-sided stems; and the leaves are connected across the stem in pairs, alternating down the stem, forming "cups" that can actually hold rainwater. See the closeup photo below.

Cup Plant grows in sunny, moist areas, reaching 4 to 10 feet high. The plants grow in colonies; under the plant are special roots called **rhizomes** that pop out of the soil to create new stems and flowers. Cup Plant spreads by rhizomes and also by seeds.

In our area, Cup Plant blooms in August, with branches of bright yellow, daisy-shaped flowers, 3-4 inches wide, blooming right at the tops of the stems. These flowers are an important source of nectar for bees, bee flies, wasps, butterflies, skipper moths, and hummingbirds. Goldfinches love the seeds, and birds drink from the cups after it rains.

These plants are also useful to birds and small mammals for shelter and shade. On wild prairies, cattle like to eat newly-sprouted Cup Plants.



BH / DL

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