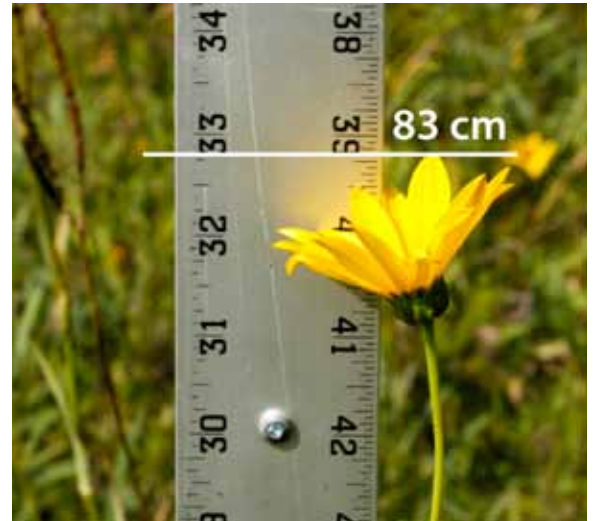


## **Helianthus rigidus**

PRAIRIE SUNFLOWER (Composite Family)

in the **Peacock Prairie** at the **James Woodworth Prairie Preserve**



This native perennial plant is 2-4' (61-122 cm) tall. It is either unbranched or sparingly branched toward the apex. The central stem is green or reddish brown; it has scattered short white hairs that are quite stiff, providing a sandpapery texture. The opposite leaves are up to 6" long and 2" across, becoming slightly smaller and more narrow as they ascend the stem. However, one or two of the uppermost leaves may alternate along the stem. These leaves are lanceolate or narrowly ovate, tapering gradually at the base. They have short thick petioles, smooth or slightly serrate margins, and a rather rough texture because of scattered short stiff hairs and fine bumps on the surface. In hot dry weather, the leaves often curl upward along the central vein. Each composite flower is about 2½-4" across, and occurs singly at the apex of the central stem. It consists of 10-25 yellow ray florets surrounding numerous reddish brown or yellow disk florets. Sometimes the ray florets fold along their length and assume a star-like quality in response to hot dry weather. .... colonies of Prairie Sunflower tend to exclude other plant species because the roots exude allelopathic chemicals that inhibit seed germination and growth of young plants. Because Prairie Sunflower is somewhat vulnerable to these chemicals itself, the plants in the middle of a colony sometimes die out, creating a "fairy ring" effect. At the Peacock/Woodworth Prairie, blooms about the 1<sup>st</sup> week of August through the 1<sup>st</sup> week of September.

Text from [http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/pr\\_sunflowerx.htm](http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/pr_sunflowerx.htm) Photos by Frank Mayfield at **black sweater art, inc.**