



NKU Science Communication Corner

Class: NKU ENV 308 | Year: Fall 2020 | Student: Megan Vineyard

Our Plant Community

When most people think of plants, their first thoughts are of either trees or flowers, and grasses are usually forgotten. I am not only talking about the perfectly trimmed grass in our front yards. I am talking about our wild grasses and other plants that make up our plant community in Northern Kentucky.

When I was little, I did not go into nature that much. I did play outside, but it was on the trimmed grass in my front yard or on the playground. I never experienced running in an open field or walking through the forest or exploring in the tall grasses. There was one time, however, I vividly remember getting to play in wild grasses, and the sad revelation about my community.

I was in 4th grade, and I had been invited by my friend to visit her grandmother's house. The house and its yard backed up to a field of wild grasses and flowers. I asked my friend if we could go explore in it and she said no. Instead, we decided to go to the edge of the field and look at the plants there. One of the plants I first saw was Giant Plume Grass (the tall plants with brown tops in the picture). The grass was tall, and it had butterflies on it. I



thought this grass was the coolest (hey, I was 11), and really wanted to go play in it. I convinced my friend to explore some more, and we went inside the tall grasses. Inside, we just found trash: plastic bottles, plastic bags, cigarettes, all kinds of paper, broken glass, and even needles. It was an ugly sight among the flowing grasses and fluttering insects.



Today, I realize the trash that dirtied my wonderful view of the Giant Plume Grass was due to illegal and irresponsible littering. People would throw trash out the window of their car, drop things when walking, etc., and the trash, due to weather, would end up in the field. This littering can not only cause human harm (e.g.: the needles and glass), but it also hurts plants, soil, and water. Toxins from this trash can soak down into the ground and end up in plants, when they are taking up nutrients from the soil, and in the water when there is runoff. These events are considered pollution. After these toxins enter the plants, water, and soil, it takes a long time for the toxins to leave the environment, and this can hurt future generations of plants, animals, and people.

Therefore, as a community, people need to help keep the environment free from trash. Simple acts such as not throwing any trash out the window, making sure garbage cans are secured, and participating in recycling can help keep litter and their toxins out of the environment. Another act that can be done as a community are street cleanups. These cleanups will help to ensure that our community is looking great and healthy, while preventing some of the trash from reaching the environment. By doing these activities, hopefully another child can fall in love with the grasses of Kentucky with no trash to harm their view.