



Glade Management and Wildlife Habitat

Travelers and landowners across southern Missouri may often see these poor, thin soil sites and make the immediate assumption the area is a useless, unproductive desert like landscape that serves little purpose or value. To some extent this is partly true. The sites are very dry during most times of the year due to their shallow soils and landscape position. For this reason it makes the area unfeasible to farm or grow improved forages for grazing.

The reality is glades offer a diverse community of wildlife and plants that can be found no where else in Missouri. Both endangered and unique wildlife species rely on this habitat. Historically speaking, these areas likely provided the open land habitat for game species like deer, quail, and turkey that is provided today by farm fields and food plots.

Management of a glade is fairly simple compared to other open land on your property. Historically regular intervals of disturbance by fire kept woody vegetation such as red cedar and elm from invading these areas and shading out desirable grasses and forbs. Over the past 70 years with fire suppression efforts and the public becoming less familiar with using fire as a management tool, natural communities like glades have deteriorated from heavy woody invasion. In many cases glade communities can be restored simply by chainsaw cutting selected trees and following up with prescribed fire at regular intervals. In some cases aggressive exotic plants may have entered the site and will need to be eradicated. Most sites generally will respond well from just the fire and thinning and do not need reseeding due to the existing dormant seed bank of native vegetation in the soil.

So why would landowners want to restore glade type communities? Again, we are talking about the potential of restoring a diverse habitat of native grasses and

wildflowers with value to a wide assortment of wildlife. Restoration of this habitat can drastically improve or increase the “useable” space available to wildlife you are interested in. Examples include Bobwhite Quail which will likely benefit from added nesting/roosting cover along with seed producing plants for food. If White-tailed Deer are important to your goals then consider the added bedding cover with the native grasses or the food value of the broadleaf plants available. If you just enjoy bird watching or an area rich with wildflowers then nothing can top a high quality glade for enjoyment.

Many landowners across the Ozarks are learning the value of restoring natural communities like glades. Likewise, state and federal agencies have focused more manpower toward use of prescribed fire in restoration efforts. The Missouri Department of Conservation offers free workshops on prescribed burning and habitat restorations periodically to help train landowners in achieving their goals. Likewise, onsite technical assistance is always available to landowners. Please contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation Office for more information or assistance.

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