

Man of Fire

(The Story of the Sunnyside Savanna Ecological Burn)

We did it, here is help for how you can too!

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The Man of Fire directed the crowd around the slowly burning debris in a designated patch of the savanna. The small group of people in attendance could feel their senses heightening. The ecological burn in the savanna rid the area of invasive vetch and was a success.

Historically, most landscapes in North America were shaped by fire. They were performed frequently for thousands of years until the 20th century when they became banned from native cultures. For indigenous cultures, controlled burns connect the ecological, social, and spiritual relationship with the land. Fire has a multitude of benefits. For the land, it increases soil fertility and native plant growth, and also promotes the diversity of animal species. Culturally, it brings communities together and reminds us of our ancestral roots.

Planning a controlled ecological burn in the city isn't by any means simple, but it is doable and well worth it. First, a community must establish a need. Maybe there is an aggressive pest invading the land or the soil has not been fertile. Whichever the reasons, the land must be surveyed and boundaries for the burn must be marked. Legally, a permit must be obtained by the Illinois EPA stating the reason for the burn and the tentative time frame in which it will be performed. Once permits have been granted, the personnel must be gathered and informed. This includes burn bosses, alders, neighbors, local fire & police departments, and community leaders.

In the weeks leading up to the burn, it's crunch time. Materials and to do's are divided and conquered. The local police, fire department, volunteers, and property owners are informed. A couple weeks before the burn, and the burn bosses take into account the wind direction, soil moisture, train schedule and any other external influences.

Finally, the day comes. The burn boss and Man of Fire instruct the crowd, "watch closely how the fire dances and you can tell if it is hungry or happy".

Thank you to all that participated and stopped by to witness the blazing fire. More detailed instructions on how to conduct your own prescribed burn are below.

Steps:

- 1. Establishing a need, the why.**
- 2. Find a burn boss, a certified person to run the burn and create a plan.**
- 3. Survey the conditions, place boundaries and mark them.**
 - Focus on areas with prevalent invasive species
- 4. Acquire permit to burn with IL EPA, and possibly hydrant permit.**
Link: <http://www.epa.state.il.us/air/permits/openburn/open-burning-permit-app.pdf>
- 5. Contact the personnel needed:**
** These were the needs for a space roughly 1 block long by 40ft wide*

- Burn card, certified burn boss
 - (1) Torch people (3-4 ppl), ignitors
 - (1) person holding propane tank
- Burn Coordinator (Garden Leader or Lead Steward)
- Permit holder: permit on a clipboard and info for any authorities
- (2) Crowd control volunteers
- (10) Crew
 - Flappers: big rubber flaps that smooch out fire
 - Rakes: to move fuel around & fire control to stifle out if needed

6. **Plan and divide materials requirements and task requirements**

Here is our materials list as an example:

- Rakes
- Flappers
- Water packs
- Red card
- Permit
- Water (hydrant access)
- 15 gallon Demi-john glass jugs
- Torches
- Propane tank
- Shovels & bucket
- Co2 Fire Extinguisher, dry chemical fire extinguisher
- Brush cutter
- First aid

7. **Notify police and fire departments, property owners and community.**

- We distributed flyers to local business, property owners and on garden property then called local city agencies

8. **Take into account the wind direction, fire sequences, train schedule, highway effects, and estimate the time needed.**

- We did a 3 hour work day and accomplished about half our space with 10 people required

9. **Day of plan:**

Prior to: brush cut if necessary

- Do not mow/cut the trees or shrubs (including St. John's Wort, Hazelnuts, and roses) * exception: Catalpas, bradford pears, and tree of heavens can be mowed/cut
- Day before: put out cones
- Welcome/introduction by garden leader
- Explanation by burn boss
- Remove no parking signs (if applicable)
- Doing the burn!
- At end, coat everything in water
- After mow, bring debris into piles for a slow burn