



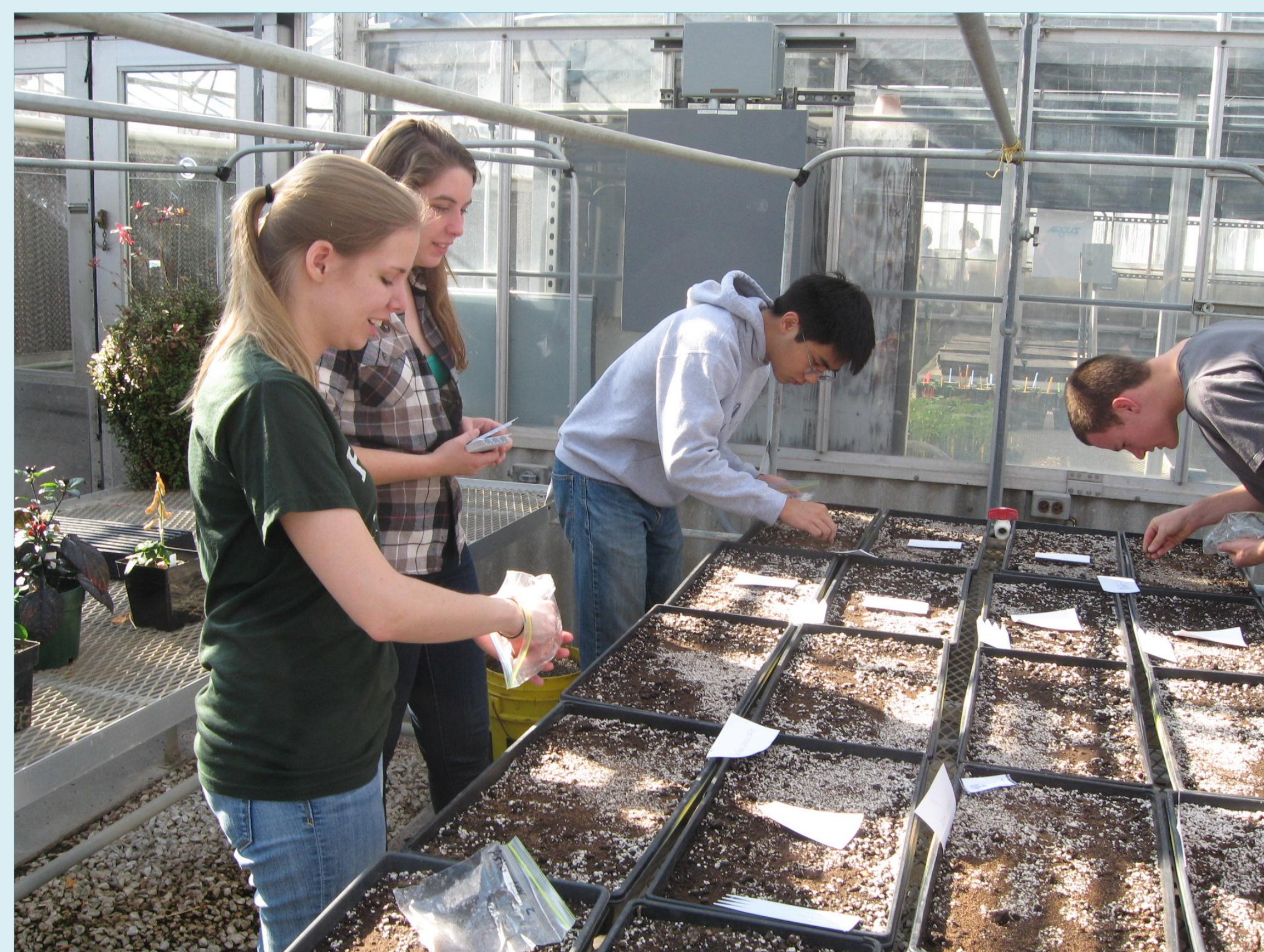
Establishing the NRB Prairie Patch

by John C. Marlin, Project Coordinator

The Student Sustainability Committee at the University of Illinois provided a grant to the Prairie Research Institute to develop a native prairie patch behind the Natural Resources Building (NRB) and grow plants for other locations. Over 100 volunteers from campus and the community at large, ranging in age from 4 to over 70, participated. The patch went from seed to full bloom in a single season. The patch attracted hundreds of butterflies, bees, birds and other species that depend on native plants for food for themselves and their young.



During December 2011, seeds were stratified by placing them in a refrigerator. This process is necessary for many species to germinate.



In late January 2012, students planted seeds in trays in the Turner Hall Greenhouse where they were frequently watered and their growth monitored.



Six to eight weeks after planting, the seedlings were transplanted to small pots to continue growing under less crowded conditions.



Facilities and Services prepared and mulched the plot. Students then used drills to prepare holes for the seedlings.



On April 22, 2012, student and staff volunteers planted seedlings of 18 prairie species in the patch.



Tiny seedlings in a sea of mulch were watered and weeded over the summer while they matured to blooming size.