



Powell Gardens Cattle Statement

As of: February 19, 2024

The next time you visit Powell Gardens' 970 acres of Midwest biodiversity, you might spy some new friends in the distance. Powell Gardens is hosting a small herd of Criollo cattle on 276 acres of our designated [prairie reconstruction](#) areas as part of the newly launched Midwest Center for Regenerative Agriculture at Powell Gardens. Regenerative agriculture is a conservation practice that improves topsoil regeneration, increases biodiversity, enhances ecosystem performance and increases resilience to climate change. The project is supported by grants from the [U.S. Department of Agriculture National Resources Conservation Service \(USDA NRCS\)](#) and the [National Audubon Society's Conservation Ranching Initiative](#), in addition to partnerships with regenerative farming experts [Good Oak](#) and [Lincoln University](#).

Regenerative agriculture in action

Regenerative agriculture helps our local habitats thrive while providing the food we all need to survive. This means emphasizing native species and working with, not against, our natural ecosystems. Regenerative agriculture can reduce carbon emissions, improve water quality, avoid agrichemical pollution, create more resilient farms — and feed you!

Get a glimpse of regenerative agriculture in action as a small herd of heritage cattle and sheep assist Powell Gardens' land stewardship efforts by doing what they do best: grazing. The herd will move across prairie reconstruction areas closed to the public but can be occasionally viewed from the Missouri Barn & Silo.

Grazing animals can promote prairie health

Regenerative agriculture systems will improve the health of Powell Gardens and mimic the wild grazing that occurred as native grasslands and American Bison coevolved together. Grazing isn't appropriate in all circumstances of grassland stewardship, but when used thoughtfully, it can be a powerful tool in our conservation toolbox. Modern, eco-friendly farms use multispecies rotational grazing with domesticated breeds: They strategically move livestock between different sections of pasture to benefit both the land and the animals.

These planned moves help cattle and other grazers get the most nutritional content from the pasture, reduce illnesses, and raise their quality of life. In return, grazed areas regrow faster during recovery periods, and the soil gets a boost from the natural **fertilizer the herd produces**. We're looking forward to watching this mutually beneficial relationship play out on our own landscape.

You can read more about the science behind responsible grazing here:

- [“Grazing enhances species diversity in grassland communities,”](#) Pulungan, M.A., Suzuki, S., Gavina, M.K.A. *et al. Scientific Reports*.1 August 2019.
- [“Grazing management effects on plant species diversity in tallgrass prairie,”](#) Hickman, KR, Hartnett, DC, Cochran, RC, Owensby, CE. *Journal of Range Management*. 2004.

Rotational grazing versus confined feeding

If your only exposure to cattle farming has been feed lots, you may be surprised by this restorative approach. Regenerative agriculture is supported by environmental conservationists and is vastly different from confined animal feedlots. Confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), or factory farms, raise justified concerns about waste materials, water contamination, air quality, ethical animal treatment, and invasive odors.

Unlike confined animal feeding, rotational grazing gives animals the freedom to roam and eat a variety of their favorite unprocessed plant foods. Herds are integrated into a healthy ecosystem where waste is distributed and broken down organically.

*Want to learn more about initiatives undertaken by the Midwest Center for Regenerative Agriculture at Powell Gardens and the Midwest spirit of place? **Stay up to date by visiting the Powell Gardens [website](#) and subscribing to our email list.***