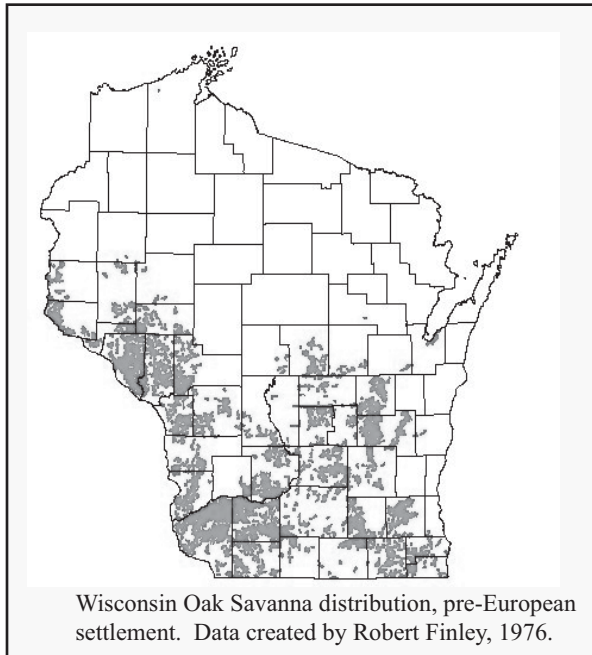


Where were oak savannas historically found?

- Oak savannas can be found in flat areas. But, more typically, they were found in hilly areas, often in ravines or at the base of slopes.



What are the characteristics of oak savanna ecosystems?

- A canopy dominated by scattered open-crown oaks, with cover ranging from about 10% to 50%.
- An understory that receives dappled sun and shade, permitting the growth of a wide variety of grasses and flowering plants.

What happened to Wisconsin oak savannas?

- The fertile soil and abundant game associated with savannas led settlers to convert many acres to agriculture or homesteads.
- Fire suppression led to an overgrowth of brush and denser canopies in remaining savannas.
- Today, original oak savanna is the rarest plant community in the state. Less than 0.01% of intact, high quality oak savanna ecosystem remains in Wisconsin.



What role did fires play in maintaining oak savannas?

- Before European settlement, regular fires set by lightning or Native Americans burned through oak savannas at least once every three to five years.
- These low intensity ground fires incinerated dead vegetation, promoting plant growth by returning nutrients to the soil.
- Oak trees have very thick bark and other adaptations that make them fire-resistant. Weedy trees and brush species are not fire-resistant and are suppressed by regular burning.
- Fire maintains openings in the canopy cover, allowing oak seeds to sprout within gaps left by trees suppressed by fires.

How is this situation improving?

- Citizens increasingly appreciate oak savannas local scenic beauty, and preservation of rare wildlife and plant species.
- Remaining parcels of degraded oak savanna are being identified in areas less altered from their original composition-woodlot edges, roadsides, and breaks in forest canopies-leading to restoration and preservation opportunities.
- Many public and private organizations at local, state, and federal levels have programs to help private landowners pay for and execute savanna restoration on their property. (Please see the back of this flier for contact information).