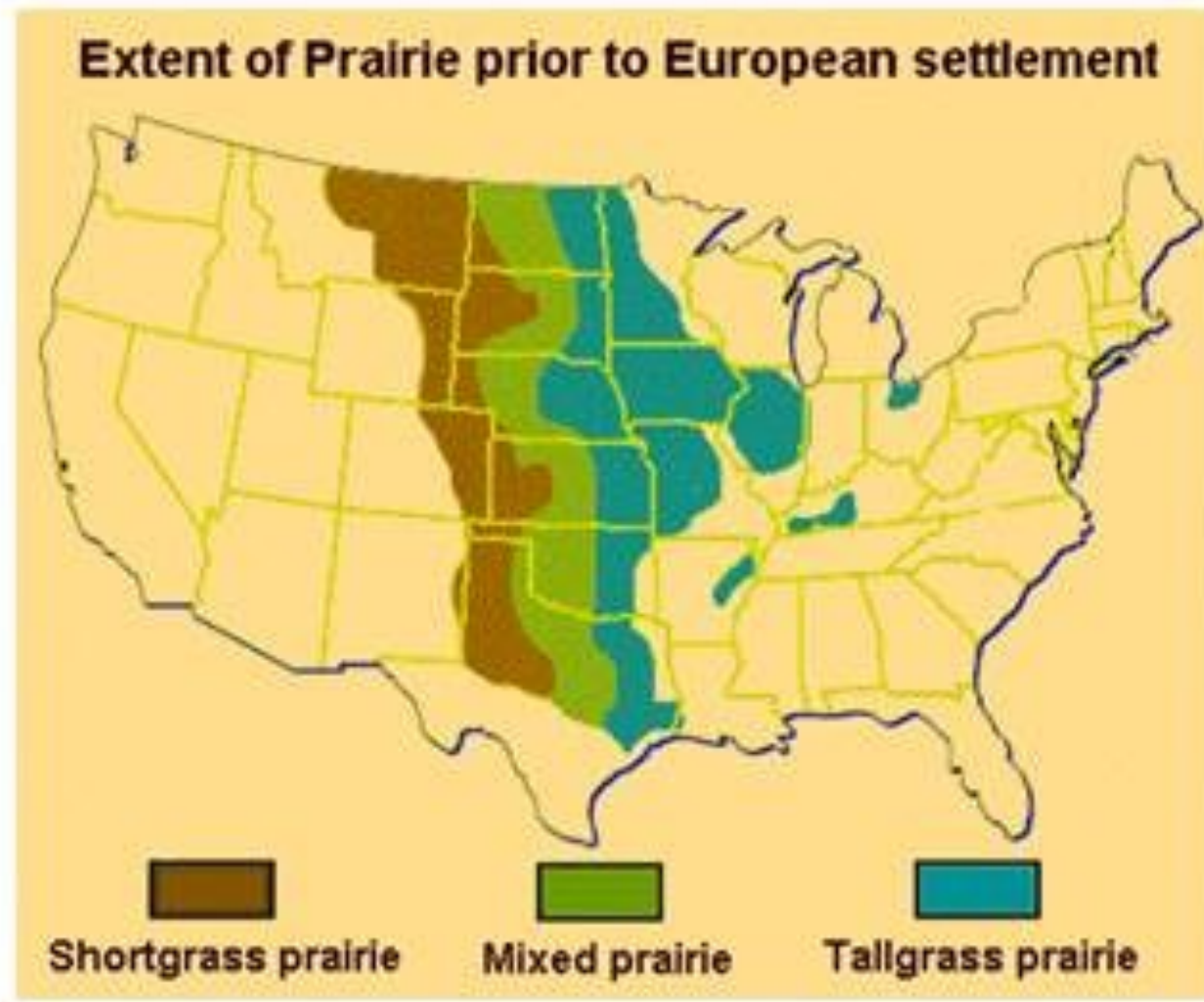




JERRY SMITH PARK

Missouri Tallgrass Prairies *Pre-settlement*

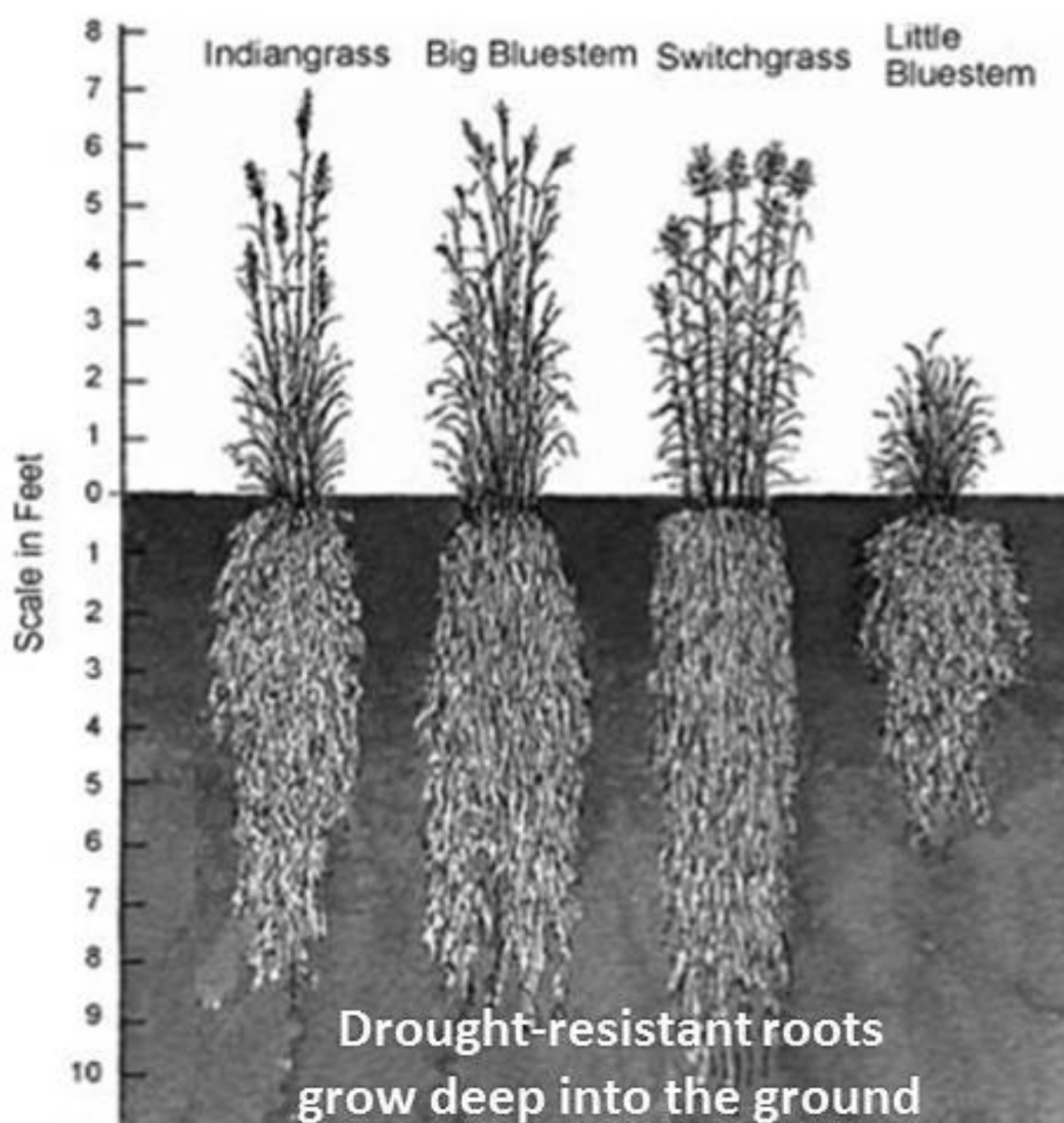


Before settlement, tallgrass prairie covered 15 million acres of Missouri

- For 10,000 years before settlement, a tallgrass prairie covered 15 million acres of Missouri, like an ocean of grass extending to the Great Plains. The tall grasses were deep enough to hide a horse and its rider.
- Settlers plowed the prairie soil under to grow crops, suppressed fire, and fenced land for cattle. Prairies disappeared.
- Today less than 1/10th of 1 percent of native prairie remains and is probably more rare and endangered than the rainforest.

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE

The most obvious features of tallgrass prairies are the tall grasses. Most species are between 3 feet and 7 feet tall, with occasional stalks as high as 10 feet tall.



Prairies include a large percentage of forbs (e.g., wildflowers).

- Lead plant (*Amorpha spp.*)
- Prairie rosinweed (*Silphium spp.*)
- Gayfeathers (*Liatris spp.*)
- Sunflowers (*Helianthus spp.*)
- Asters (*Aster and Symphyotrichum spp.*)
- Coneflowers (*Echinacea spp.*, *Rudbeckia spp.*)
- and many other species.

