Plant preferences and observations on development in the spittle bug
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Spittle bugs are leafhoppers that live near forested environments. As nymphs, they spend their lives feeding on water resources of a host plant to create a coating of spittle around their bodies. The spittle maintains a moist exoskeleton until individuals molt into adulthood. For my research I wondered what plants these bugs are found on and if the volume of spittle changes throughout time? For a period of five days, I observed spittle bugs at three sites (each with an area of 4 m$^2$) and identified the plants on which individuals were found and measured spittle volume for individuals. Two sites were located near forest in a prairie complex, and the third site was located along the roadside. I found that in the prairie golden rod is the plant on which most individuals were found, whereas individuals seemed to prefer red clover at the roadside. Spittle volume increased slowly throughout time, but was variable for individuals. For three bugs, volume increased 0.004, 2.7, and 0.13 cm$^3$. I also found that the average spittle size along the roadside was 0.3 cm$^3$ larger than average spittle sizes in the prairie.