



# Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS  
NATIVE GRASSES



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It has been an exciting summer here at Prairie Originals with a cornucopia of butterflies and moths showing up to visit our native plants for food and nectar. We are finding something new and different every week. It seems like Biodiversity Central around here. The warm, dry spring has probably been a significant factor in this as well as all the native plant hosts and nectar plants we have here.

## What's Blooming Now?

Our growing season continues to be 1 to 2 weeks ahead of last year. There are lots of flowers blooming now including Yellow Coneflower, Purple Coneflower, Wild Bergamot, Black Eyed Susan, Gaillardia, Culver's Root, Blue Vervain, Yarrow, False Sunflower, Giant Hyssop, Turtlehead, Pearly Everlasting, Narrowleaf Meadowsweet, Leadplant, Swamp Milkweed and Harebell. Big Bluestem, Switch Grass, Side Oats and Prairie Dropseed are also heading out now.

This picture (right) of one of our shrub and flower beds was taken on July 11. The False Sunflower and Giant Hyssop are two of our longer blooming wildflowers, going for 6 – 8 weeks from mid June to mid August.



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Yellow Coneflower, Purple Coneflower and Pearly Everlasting are all great plants for dry conditions.

**Yellow and Purple Coneflower** are prairie plants. Our native Purple Coneflower *Echinacea angustifolia* is different than the Purple Coneflower *Echinacea purpurea* that is found in garden centres. Our Purple Coneflower grows 30 – 45 cm tall (1 – 1 ½ ft.) and has narrow leaves. It prefers dry, very well drained soil. Sandy or gravelly soil is fine for it. In the wild it can be found in south west Manitoba. I saw it growing in the sandy soils of Criddle Vane Homestead Provincial Park between Brandon and Spruce Woods Provincial Park. When planting it in flower beds it needs to be in dry beds that are not being regularly watered for other flowers. The roots are used medicinally to treat many ailments and to boost the immune system. The Coneflowers both like lots of sun.

Left: Yellow  
Coneflowers



Right: Purple  
Coneflower



**Pearly Everlasting** (right) is usually seen in places like the Whiteshell area of eastern Manitoba in the rocky Canadian Shield. The silvery foliage is a nice contrast to other plants and the white flowers dry on the plant and look nice for the remainder of the season. It is the host to the Painted Lady butterfly caterpillars. It grows in sun or part shade.



**Turtlehead** (left & below) is the exception in this group. It prefers moist to wet, rich soil and grows in sun or shade.



It usually blooms in August so it is quite early this year.



## Bird, Butterfly & Creature News

Let's start with the birds. We have two sparrow nests close by this year. A Chipping Sparrow (*right*) made a nest in our Wild Grape vine covering the archway into our container growing area. She doesn't seem to be afraid of people because we are constantly walking under the archway. After the eggs hatched we would see Mrs. Bird carrying bugs and caterpillars to the nest every day.



Then on the July 1<sup>st</sup> weekend we found another type of Sparrow nest perched amongst the tall grass and thistles on our septic field. It was so well disguised we almost pulled out the thistles that were hiding it. When we first found it, it was empty but then every day there was a small, blue speckled egg laid in it until there were four eggs and then Mrs. Bird started sitting on the eggs. It may be a Clay Coloured Sparrow but it is difficult to see without scaring the bird away.

The butterflies keep on coming this year. We have had a tremendous amount of Monarchs flying around and many, many caterpillars. Many of the caterpillars have formed a chrysalis already and some of the fresh, brightly coloured Monarchs are starting to hatch out. We noticed the first ones hatching on July 3, 11 days after the chrysalis formed. They are fast. The green chrysalis turns black the night before they hatch so this is your cue to watch them hatching early the next morning. Remember that Monarch caterpillars only eat Milkweed so you need to have Milkweed in your garden if you want to watch this miracle of nature occur.

On June 24 we had a Black Swallowtail caterpillar form a chrysalis in our terrarium. It has been in there 17 days now so they take longer than the Monarchs. The Black Swallowtail caterpillars change colour as they grow. Three stages of growth are shown below.

These butterfly caterpillars only eat plants in the Parsley Family, which includes our garden Parsley, Dill and Carrots as well as our native Heartleaf and Golden Alexander.



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The **Painted Lady Butterflies** have been here in abundance this year too. Their caterpillars feed on Pussy Toes and Pearly Everlasting, both plants with silvery leaves. They are more shy and form a little shelter out of leaves when feeding. When you find caterpillars hanging in the “J” shape that means they will be turning into a chrysalis fairly soon.



A new caterpillar that we have never seen before showed up one day on our Wild Hops. They are really exotic looking and we had quite a few. We put a few large ones in our terrarium and a few days later they formed a chrysalis. We were rewarded 9 days later with the hatching butterfly. When they are newly hatched they must hang for a few hours for their wings to expand, dry and harden before they can fly so this is an ideal opportunity to photograph them. They are **Question Mark butterflies**. Can you see the silver question mark on the underside of their wings? Another host for the caterpillars besides the Wild Hop is Nettles.



Another new creature for us appeared on our Sweet Scented Bedstraw *Galium triflorum*. We learned that it is a caterpillar of the **White Lined Sphinx Moth**. Since it is a moth caterpillar, it forms a cocoon in the soil instead of a chrysalis. We placed a pile of soil in our terrarium and on July 12 it started burrowing into the soil. With luck we will see the adult hatch out. Another host plant for the caterpillar is Fireweed.



See <http://www.silkmoths.bizland.com/hlinelin.htm> and <http://mothphotographersgroup.msstate.edu/species.php?hodge=7894> for more info and pictures.

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We have also had a huge amount of newly hatched Red Admiral butterflies show up the week of July 9. They were thoroughly enjoying the nectar from the Culver's Root.

They are a close relative of Painted Lady butterflies. Host plants for the Red Admiral caterpillars are Nettles and maybe Wild Hops. Although I haven't seen any, Nettles are quite common around sloughs, bushes and moist places.



## New for 2012

We have several varieties in 1 Gallon pots at this time of year. Big Bluestem, Manitoba's Provincial Grass is available and we also have lots of 1 gallon Giant Hyssop. Both in the 1 Gallon size are \$9.50 each or 10 for \$85.00.

## Fascinating Facts



**Culver's Root** *Veronicastrum virginicum* is a rare plant in Manitoba. It is found in our southernmost prairies near Tolstoi. Culver's Root was used by a number of native tribes for assorted medicines. It was named in honour of Dr. Culver who prescribed the dried roots as an effective laxative. It grows easily in sunny to part shade sites with medium to wet soils. It is a great plant to attract pollinators.

The most common visitors are long and short tongued bees, which collect pollen and nectar. Other pollinators include honeybees, bumblebees, mason bees, green metallic bees, masked bees, butterflies, moths and syrphid flies. If deer are a problem for you, note that deer don't bother it at all at Prairie Originals. Culver's Root is native from Manitoba to the east coast and in the eastern United States.

## Beneficial Bugs

In the insect world we have millions of different kinds of insects. I think in general people give insects a bad rap. We must remember though, that most insects are beneficial to us as part of the web of life in the ecosystem and are essential to our well being. Only about 0.1% are pests. We need to stop thinking about all insects as pests and put them in perspective. They are part of a healthy ecosystem or community. Listed below are two of our beneficial insects you may notice in your garden if you look closely.

**Lacewings** have two pairs of delicate lace-like wings about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " long. There are two families of lacewings: brown lacewings and green lacewings. Both families are widely distributed and are commonly seen by gardeners. Adults are sometimes observed flying to lights at night or against the outside of screened windows. Larvae are harder to find and frequently camouflage themselves by attaching debris to their back.

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The **green lacewing** has become important as a commercial pest control agent in recent years; it has been mass-produced and released for control of aphids on many important greenhouse and agricultural crops. Adult green lacewings are beautiful green or yellow –green insects with golden eyes. The adult lacewing lives 20 to 40 days and feeds only on pollen or honeydew from aphids and other bugs. Each female lays 10 – 30 eggs per day. The larvae emerge in about 5 days and they feed on many types of soft bodied insects such as aphids and mealybugs as well as caterpillars and eggs of many insects and mites. The larvae are very active and look like flat alligators, but with large, tusks. These hollow tusks are used to pierce prey and suck out body fluids. The larger larvae do not hesitate to attack considerably larger pest insects, such as caterpillars.



**Hover Flies (or Syrphid Flies)** are also called flower flies because they frequently visit flowers. They are nectar and pollen feeders and are important pollinators. For protection, many adults are brightly coloured with yellow, black or metallic looking markings that mimic the markings of wasps and bees. There is a whole family of many kinds of Hover Flies with a range of feeding habits. Adults of the predator species can usually be observed hovering around flowers or aphid colonies. They are easily mistaken for bees or wasps, but their hovering habit is steadier and more intense than bees or wasps.



After feeding on pollen for protein, the females lay eggs one at a time on leaves. The larvae that emerge are the important stage if you are relying on hover flies for aphid control. These larvae can frequently be seen moving about in aphid colonies, attacking aphids by puncturing their skins and sucking out the liquid contents. After feeding and molting a number of times, the larvae form into tear or barrel shaped pupae, which are glued to the leaf. These pupae often resemble grape seeds. If you place one in a jar and let it emerge from its pupa, you can get a good look at an adult. But sometimes shiny, metallic-green mini wasps emerge instead of the adult hover fly. These are secondary parasitic insects that have killed the developing hover fly pupae.

Like the bees whose markings and color they imitate, these valuable hover flies are especially at risk from insecticides used on flowering plants. You should let the hover flies eat your aphids; if you feel you must take further action against the aphids, try washing them off the plant with a strong stream of water every three or four days until the natural enemies of the aphids make their appearance in the garden and take over.

You can encourage native predators by growing a variety of flowering plants so a variety of insects will be present. That way the predators stay nearby, feeding on each insect population in turn according to which is most abundant. Good plants to have in the garden for pollen and nectar for these beneficials include Goldenrods and Yarrow.

## Invasive Plant Alert

**COMMON BUCKTHORN** CAN LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT YIELD LOSSES AND LOWERED GRADES OF CEREAL BY BEING AN ALTERNATE HOST FOR A FUNGUS THAT CAUSES OAT RUST.



**Origin:** European buckthorn is native of Eurasia. It was introduced to North America as an ornamental shrub, for fence rows and wildlife habitat.

**Status:** This plant is found in Manitoba and is a large problem in natural areas within Winnipeg.

**Impacts:** This plant is able to successfully invade habitats because of its tolerance of a wide range of moisture and light conditions, and its prolific seed production. The dense shade produced by stands often reduces biodiversity in a habitat. Thorns can be harmful to humans or animals that come into contact.

**Where to Look:** Common in fence rows, pastures, roadsides, woodland and abandoned areas. It can also be seen infesting natural areas and invading river bottom and upland forest habitat .

**LOOK FOR:**

- LEAVES: DARK GREEN WITH SLIGHTLY SERRATED EDGES, ELLIPTIC TO OVATE, 3.5-7.5 CM THEY GROW IN PAIRS, BUT NOT EXACTLY OPPOSITE.
- FLOWERS: SMALL, GREENISH TO YELLOWISH, SHORT-STALKED AND IN SMALL CLUSTERS.
- GENERAL: SHRUB TO 6M TALL, OUTER BARK IS DARK WITH SMALL PORES AND INNER BARK IS ORANGE.

**STOP THE INVASION— Report a Sighting!**

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**InvasiveSpeciesCouncilofManitoba**

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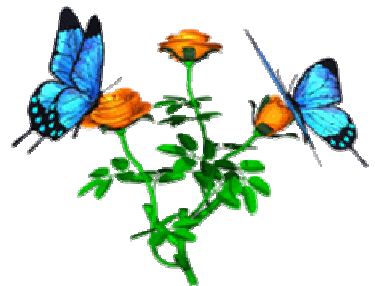
ph: (204) 232-6021 fax: (204) 986-7236

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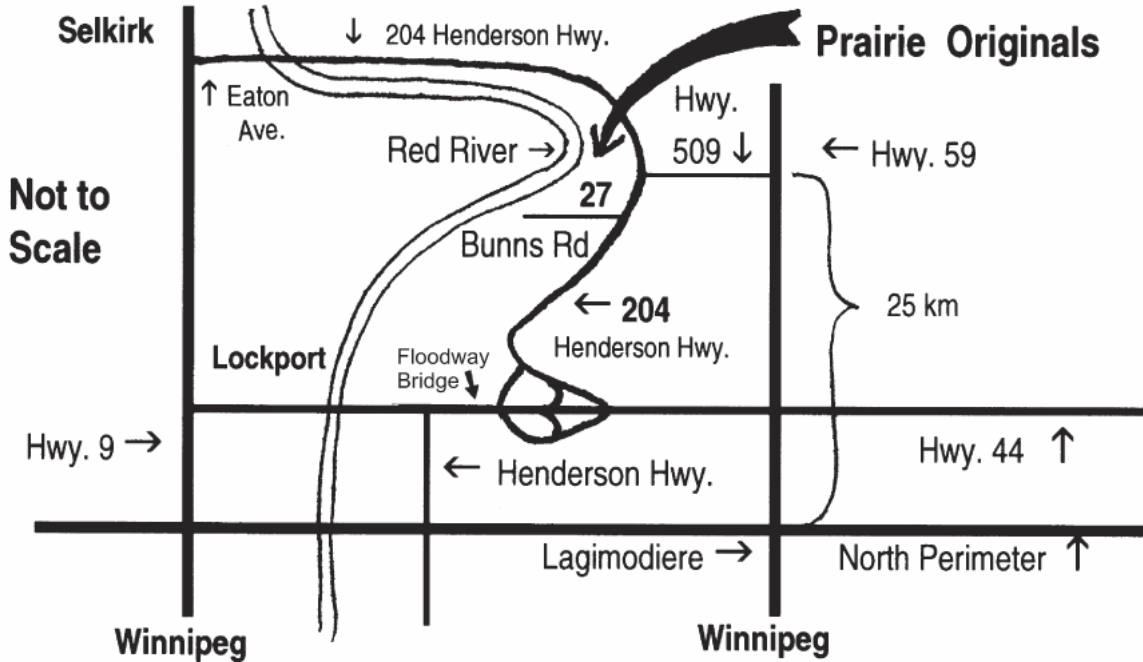
Until next time,

Shirley Froehlich, Stefania Johnson

Alexis Nazeravich and Anica Martin



# LOCATION



# HOURS

May 11 - June 29	Monday to Friday	10 am - 6 pm
	Saturday	9 am - 5 pm
Evenings by Appointment	Sundays - until June 17	11am - 5 pm

July, August, September - Usually open Monday to Saturday but **phone to confirm**

# ST. NORBERT FARMERS MARKET

June 2 - mid Aug.	Saturday	8 am - 3 pm
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Located on Pembina Highway, about 1/2 km south of the perimeter.

