



Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS
NATIVE GRASSES



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Opening Day for 2012 is Friday, May 11!

What's Blooming Now?

With the warm weather this year our Prairie Crocus bloomed early, starting on April 1, so it is finished already. Other flowers have started to take their place.

Three Flowered Avens is beginning to flower and **Early Blue Violet** is in full bloom. This is our most common prairie violet.

Wild Plums are already showing their white flowers along the roadsides in places and the Saskatoon will probably be blooming by mid May.



Bird & Butterfly News & Other Wildlife

We certainly are having an unusual and early spring this year. We uncovered our over wintering plants on March 22, 3 weeks ahead of schedule. The warm weather has brought out the butterflies early too. We saw Milbert's Tortoiseshell butterflies that same day and have seen both it and their cousins, the Mourning Cloak butterflies as least once a week since March. These two butterflies over winter as adults so they are often out on the first warm days of spring.



We have had some other interesting creatures visit us since our last newsletter in June 2011. June 2011 was quite wet so we found a cute little **Tree Frog** perching on the leaves of our Wild Black Currant pots. Later it was seen clinging to the window of our workshop watching us work. Tree Frogs have little suction cups on their feet so they can climb on anything.

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*Galium Sphinx Moth
Caterpillar*



Reversed Haploa Moth

One day in July we discovered 8 unusual caterpillars, all the same kind and only on our Fireweed plants. We were curious so Alexis investigated and discovered they were **Galium Sphinx Moths** and the only host plants for the caterpillars are our native Fireweed and Northern Bedstraw.

Also last July we found an unusual moth on the Turtlehead plants. It was a **Reversed Haploa Moth** which is a type of Tiger Moth with Woolly Bear type caterpillars.

We also had some interesting wildlife encounters when we were covering our container plants for the winter on November 17. First thing in the morning we were serenaded by the coyotes. We had heard them occasionally at night before but never in the daytime. Later that morning our neighbourhood **Pileated Woodpecker**, Woody, came to visit our birdfeeder.

When you have native plants growing in your garden you never know what kind of fascinating creatures will drop by for a visit.

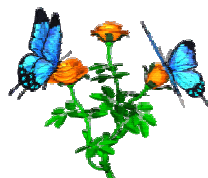


New for 2012

Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus pauciflorus* is a small shrub growing 30 – 60 cm tall (1 – 2 ft.). It has white/pink flowers in June followed by white berries born singly in upper leaf axils or in terminal clusters of 2 or 3. The 6 mm berries on this Snowberry are larger and more ornamental than those on the **Western Snowberry** *Symphoricarpos occidentalis* which has smaller white berries but in larger numbers.



Both types of Snowberry spread by creeping roots so they are great for naturalizing and filling large spaces. They are important food and cover sources for birds. They are adaptable to a wide range of conditions from sun to shade and dry to moist soil. Both species are currently available in 4.5" deep pots and Snowberry will be available in 2 gallon pots in fall and in 2013. The berries are not edible. In the wild they are native all across Canada and the northern half of the United States. The Western Snowberry is one of the most widespread and commonest shrubs.



Fascinating Facts

The leaves, stems and flowers of our native violets are edible. Most leaves are tender and sweet and make an excellent salad green or trail nibble. Added to soups, the leaves act as thickeners. The flowers provide pretty, edible garnishes (fresh or candied) for salads, and desserts. They also add delicate flavouring and/or colouring for vinegar, jelly, syrup, jams and preserves. The leaves and flowers have also been steeped in hot water to make tea or even fermented to make wine, and they are delicious added to omelettes and fritters.



Caution – Use violets in moderation. Some leaves contain saponin, which causes digestive upset in large quantities. Violet roots, fruits and seeds should not be eaten as they contain toxins that can cause severe stomach upset as well as nervousness and respiratory and circulatory suppression.



Clockwise from top:
Northern Bog Violet
Western Canada
Violet
Downy Yellow
Violet
Crowfoot Violet



Interesting Books

I read a fascinating book this winter called **Bringing Nature Home – How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants** by Douglas Tallamy. Reading this book will give you a new appreciation of the complex natural world and how much wild creatures need gardens that mimic the disappearing wild. William Cullina, Director of Horticultural Research for the New England Wild Flower Society says this about the book:

“We all hear that insects and animals depend on plants, but in Bringing Nature Home, Douglas Tallamy presents a powerful and compelling illustration of how the choices we make as gardeners can profoundly impact the diversity of life in our yard, towns and on our planet. This important work should be required reading for anyone who ever put shovel to earth.”

The author recognizes the changing dynamics of our world and suggests how individual gardeners, collectively can protect and conserve the local biological diversity that is truly vital and irreplaceable. **Bringing Nature Home** will persuade all of us to take a look at what is in our yards with an eye to how we, too, can make a difference in the biodiversity of our communities and the health of our land. I highly recommend this book. It is available at bookstores or at the Library through Inter Library Loan.

2012 Colour of the Year

Tangerine Tango, a spirited reddish orange was selected by the Pantone Colour Institute as the colour of the year. You will see Tangerine Tango popping up everywhere in 2012 from fashion to home décor to gardening. Our native Red Lily *Lilium philadelphicum* has gorgeous flowers in this bright reddish orange colour in late June. Even someone like me, who pays little attention to fashion trends, can be right in style this year with our native Red Lily in the garden.



Garden Design & Maintenance

Everyone loves a beautiful garden however many gardens are designed for beauty only without much thought for the practical problems of maintenance. This only builds in problems from the start. The ideal garden design should preserve the balance of nature - the harmonious coexistence of plants, birds, insects and other organisms. Designing a garden that largely maintains its own balance of pests and controls is the best way to a beautiful garden with as little effort as possible..

Many gardens are greatly simplified in the number and arrangement of species they support compared to the complexity of undisturbed natural environments. These simple gardens with a small variety of plants and other organisms lack some of the protective mechanisms of more complex natural ecosystems or communities. Simple gardens are much more prone to insect problems and diseases.

Organisms live in communities. The complex interactions within these communities are the most reliable mechanisms for achieving and maintaining stability in an ecosystem. These communities are in the air surrounding the plants, on all the surfaces of the plants, above and below the ground, on the ground surface and between soil particles. Often they form extremely intimate internal associations with the plants, such as the relationship between plants and the mycorrhizal fungi or nitrogen-producing bacteria that assist plants in acquiring nutrients. A myriad of life forms, most too small to notice with the naked eye, most without common names and many difficult to identify, make up the true plant and garden environment. Any garden model that does not recognize the desirability of this natural complexity dooms the gardener to an endless battle against one plague after another.

If we think of our gardens as a complex ecosystem instead of just a collection of plants we are on the way to creating a healthy garden community that requires less work to maintain. To design a garden from an ecosystem perspective there are several things to keep in mind.

1. Diversity in the garden should be encouraged.

- Introduce a wide variety of flowering or fruiting plants. This attracts a wide variety of beneficial insects. These beneficials are predatory and parasitic on many garden insect pests. Plants in the Parsley family and in the Sunflower family are great for attracting beneficial insects because the nectar in the flowers is easily accessible to the insects. Plants in the parsley family include herbs such as dill, cilantro, parsley and caraway and native species such as Heartleaf and Golden Alexanders. Native plants in the Sunflower family include Asters, False and Narrowleaf Sunflowers, Yarrow, Prairie and Pasture Sages and Goldenrods.
- Select species to have something in bloom through most of the season, even in a veggie garden. In addition to eating garden pests, beneficial insects need nectar and pollen from flowers for nourishment in order to lay eggs.
- Protect and encourage a variety of predatory garden wildlife such as toads, frogs, spiders, lizards and ground beetles. In order to provide wildlife with a variety of habitats and places to live and hide, borders can be designed with rocks and thick organic mulches and overturned pots. Keeping a garden ultra clean with every little bit of organic debris removed eliminates these living spaces.
- Avoid blanket use of pesticides no matter how non-toxic it is to humans. If a pest needs to be controlled use only spot treatments.

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2. Bare soil is undesirable.

- Bare soil invites weeds, is compacted by rain and foot traffic and tends to lose organic matter through wind and exposure to sunlight. Bare earth can be quite sterile and provides no habitat for ground dwelling natural enemies of plant pests.
- Organic mulches are one way to add diversity to the garden while protecting the soil surface.

3. A variety of desirable macro- and micro-organisms live in the soil.

- Fertile soil is teeming with simple life forms- yeasts, fungi, bacteria etc. These tiny, simple life forms are beneficial for plants and they are not harmful to people. They get their food from the decomposition of organic matter. They in turn produce plant nutrients in the form of relatively stable compounds and are themselves the basis of many food chains within the soil. These organisms also compete with or destroy potentially destructive inhabitants of soil and root systems. A complex soil community with many interlocking food webs provides the greatest resistance to invasion by exotic organisms such as plant diseases and insects. Exotic pests that are blown in by the wind or carried in by birds and other mammals or that travel in on their own will find a wealth of predators, parasitoids and competitors already established. These make it difficult for the stranger to survive and multiply. Thus, encouraging a diversity of soil life, even though most of it is hidden or too small to see, is an important part of creating diversity in the garden and protecting it from exotic invaders.
- Help keep these beneficial macro- and micro-organisms at healthy populations for the plants by working organic matter (the microbes food source) into the soil and providing a residue of organic mulch on the soil surface.

4. Learn to live with some pest damage.

- Some damage from pests is natural and desirable. Take pest control action only if the amount of damage is or will become intolerable.
- Deliberately allow the presence of some pest insects so their natural enemies will also be present. If you adopt the attitude that some visible affects of pest activity are tolerable, you can provide a garden environment that encourages the buildup of natural enemies of the pests, which in turn reduces pest populations and ensures that the damage remains within the tolerable range.

If you design your garden keeping these principles in mind it will be beautiful and productive with its own balance of pests and controls.

From: Common Sense Pest Control by Olkowski, Daar & Olkowski

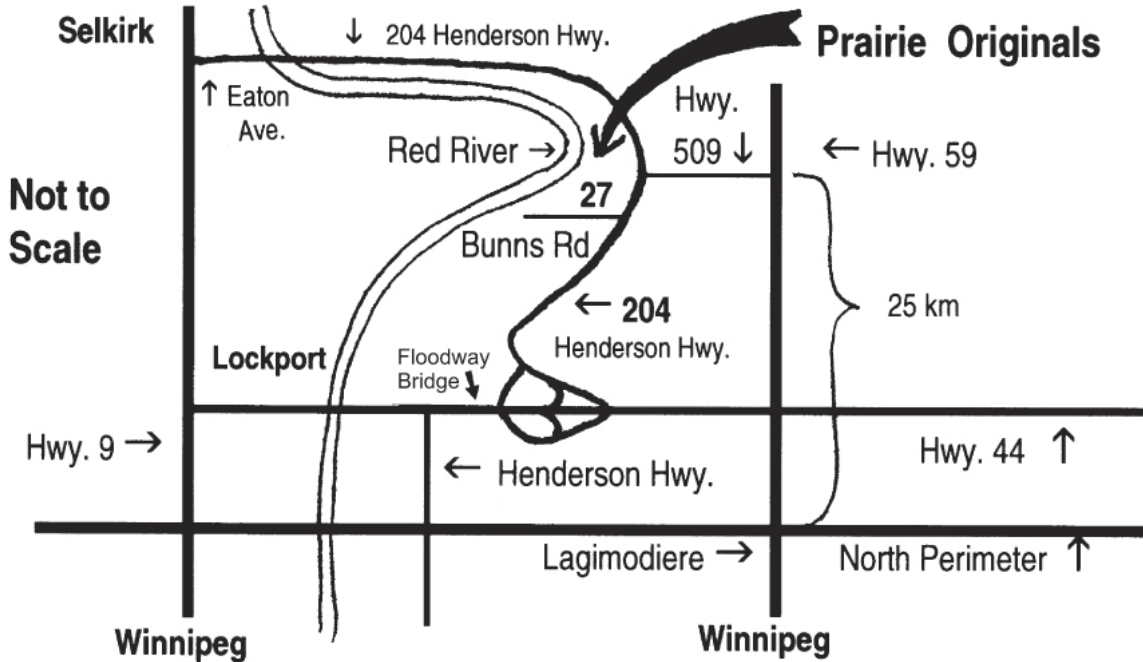


Until next time,

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.

