



Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS
NATIVE GRASSES



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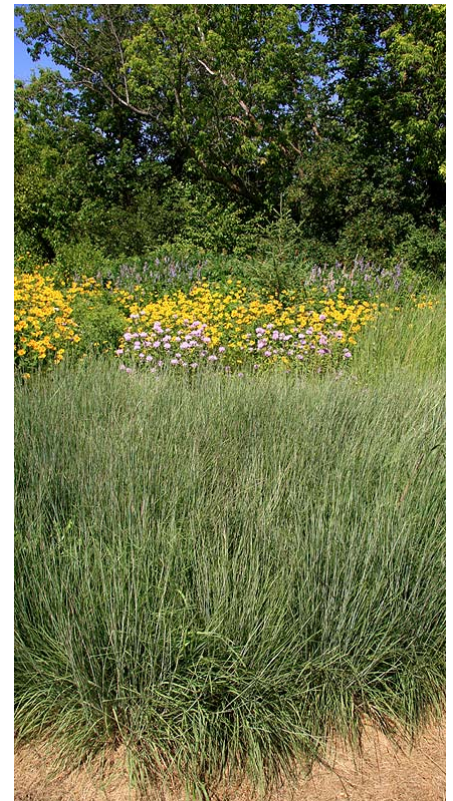
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Where has the summer gone? I guess you could say it was short & sweet this year. Several of our staff have already headed back to University and the rest of us are busy collecting and cleaning seed throughout September and into October. For some species like the Narrowleaf Sunflower it is a race to get the seed before the Goldfinches eat it. Kelly is making some new Sweet Grass braids too so it smells wonderful around here. We are open Monday to Saturday in September and some in October. Fall is just fine for planting any of our 4.5" pots of wildflowers and grasses as well as all of the shrubs and vines. They can be planted as long as the ground is not frozen. We wish everyone a warm and pleasant fall season.

What's Blooming Now?

The stars of the garden from mid- August and into September are Asters, Goldenrods and the prairie grasses. Smooth Aster is mauve, Many Flowered Aster is white and New England Aster is purple. Goldenrods are yellow. The Low & Stiff Goldenrods are finished blooming in late August and the Showy Goldenrod is still in full bloom at that time. All the warm season grasses are at their peak in August/September. They reach their full height and get their distinctive seedheads in early August and then their leaves turn shades of autumn in September, just like the leaves on the trees turn colour. Switchgrass turns yellow and Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, Little Bluestem and Prairie Dropseed all turn beautiful rusty tones. Very attractive. Since the growing season is several weeks later than normal this year the grasses should be turning colour around mid September.

Little Bluestem *Schizachne purpurascens* (right) really comes into its own in September with its fluffy seedheads and wonderful fall colour. It is a favourite for landscaping and prairie meadows because it grows only 45 – 70 cm tall (18" -28"). Since it is a warm season grass it doesn't start growing much until early June when it is good and warm. It doesn't reach its full height until late July. This allows the shorter June and July blooming wildflowers lots of room to grow and bloom without being hidden by the grass.



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Little Bluestem is native across a wide range of North America from Texas to Manitoba and from eastern Saskatchewan to Quebec. It loves full sun and is adaptable to a wide range of soils and moisture conditions from very dry to moist. A wide range like this tells us that this is one adaptable and tough plant.



Next time you are contemplating an addition to your garden, don't forget the subtle beauty of our prairie grasses. They are perfectly adapted to our harsh climate and they can give your garden a distinctive look with a prairie flair.



Bird & Butterfly News

We had a new family in the neighbourhood in July. We discovered a nest with eggs in mid- July on our pot bench, very well camouflaged amongst the Blue Grama Grass pots. Mama Bird started sitting on the nest on July 18 after all the eggs were laid.

The eggs hatched on July 29, a mere 11 days later. The baby birds grow incredibly fast. 9 days later we were checking on the babies and found that several had already flown the coup and the last one was teetering on the edge of the nest ready to take flight. Mama Bird was quite shy but we finally got a good look at her and discovered she was a Song Sparrow.



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The Monarch butterflies were slow to come this year but we did have more than last year. Not nearly as many as we have had in the past though. It will take several years and ideal conditions to rebuild their populations from the historic lows last winter.

We found 4 caterpillars in late July and put them in our aquarium so our staff and customers could see their metamorphosis, the big change, from caterpillar to chrysalis to adult butterfly. During this short period of time the caterpillar completely dissolves and reforms into the adult butterfly. One of the miracles of nature!

The first one hatched in 13 days on August 7. The green chrysalis turns clear, so you can see the orange and black wings, the night before they are ready to hatch. They generally hatch early in the morning unless it is cool and cloudy. They come out with a fat black body and tiny wrinkled wings. Fluid is pumped from the body into the wings to expand them over about 15 minutes and then it must hang to dry for an hour or two. The others hatched a few days later, ready to go out and continue the cycle of life by mating and laying eggs.



On Aug. 14, Kelly found 17 more caterpillars of assorted sizes on the Swamp & Whorled Milkweed. They were probably the second generation. These all formed chrysalis and on Aug. 24 & 25 the first few hatched. They should all be finished hatching the first week of September, in time to begin the big migration down to Mexico.



Meet the Weeds

Chickweed *Stellaria media* is a common annual weed that many people are familiar with. It is a weed in many parts of North America and is found all around the globe including Antarctica. Because of this it is known by many other common names such as chick-whirtles, cluckenweed, mischievous Jack, skirt buttons, starweed, satin flower and white bird's eye. The plant grows low to the ground with weak, trailing stems up to 80 cm long (2 ½ feet). It has small, ovate, opposite leaves and the white flowers, 6 mm across (1/4"), are found in small clusters near the ends of branches. Chickweed is shade tolerant so it can be a pest in crops and vegetable and flower gardens where it competes for moisture. It easily breaks off at the roots when trying to pull it. This is one plant you don't want to allow to go to seed. It grows very fast so you must keep after it. With 2-3 generations possible in one growing season, a single seed can produce 7 ½ to 11 billion offspring! Common chickweed can survive temperatures of minus 10 degrees C with little or no frost damage. Its preferred growing conditions are rich, organic soil and good moisture. It is generally not a problem in dry areas.



There is a native Long Stalked Chickweed *Stellaria longipes*, found growing in moist woods and meadows. It is easily distinguished from the annual weed by its long, lance shaped leaves. It is not a problem plant at all.

Beneficial Bugs

There are many species of **Minute Pirate Bugs** *Oriustriticolor* and other species in North America. These tiny, oval, flat bugs 2 – 5 mm long (1/10 – 1/5 inch) are good bugs with a pointed head. They are dark with whitish wing markings. They are found in flowers, leaf litter and on bark.

Pirate bugs feed on soft bodied insects and insect eggs throughout the summer. They attack thrips, aphids, spider mites and scales. Their long proboscis digs deep into flower buds, searching out tasty thrips to eat. They have several generations per summer and when days shorten in fall they become inactive and bed down in leaf litter to overwinter.

These aphid eating-friends are very small so we may not notice them in our gardens but they are living and working away in the background helping to keep pests under control and maintain a healthy, balanced ecosystem in the garden.



Fascinating Plants



Ironweed *Veroniafasciculata* is one of our prairie wildflowers that is very rare in the wild. Manitoba is the only place it grows in Canada and there are only two known sites in Manitoba. These are west of Morris and along the Rat River south of Winnipeg. It grows in the Midwestern United States as well. It has lance shaped, toothed leaves and grows 90–150 cm tall (3 to 5 ft.) with a slender shape. The rosy purple flowers appear in flattop clusters at the top of the plant in mid- August. It is a good nectar plant for butterflies and long tongued

native bees. Ironweed is also a host plant for the American Painted Lady butterfly caterpillars. In the wild it grows in wet prairies and marshes so in the garden it prefers moist to wet soil and full sun.

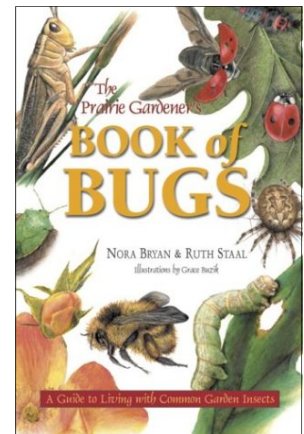
Websites to Explore

The Manitoba Eco Network www.mbeconetwork.org is a non-profit organization which promotes positive environmental action. They connect Manitobans and provide information and education. Their projects include Organic Lawn Care, Climate Change, Water Caucus, Reel Green Film Festival, Eco Journal and more.

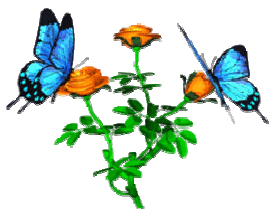
Interesting Books

The Prairie Gardener's Book of Bugs by Nora Bryan and Ruth Staal is designed to help prairie gardeners identify insects and learn what effect they have on their plants. The book describes and discusses over one hundred insects, spiders, mites, slugs and earthworms that frequent prairie gardens. Each bug is shown with full colour drawings.

They discuss the beneficial bugs along with the pests in terms that everyone can understand. The Bug Profiles give size, pictures, where you find it and when, what it eats, whether it is a friend or foe and what to do about it. This is followed by a more detailed “bug bio” that elaborates on the bugs life cycle, its habits and how best to deal with it, if at all.



Until next time,



**Shirley Froehlich, Kelly Leask,
and Elizabeth Worden**



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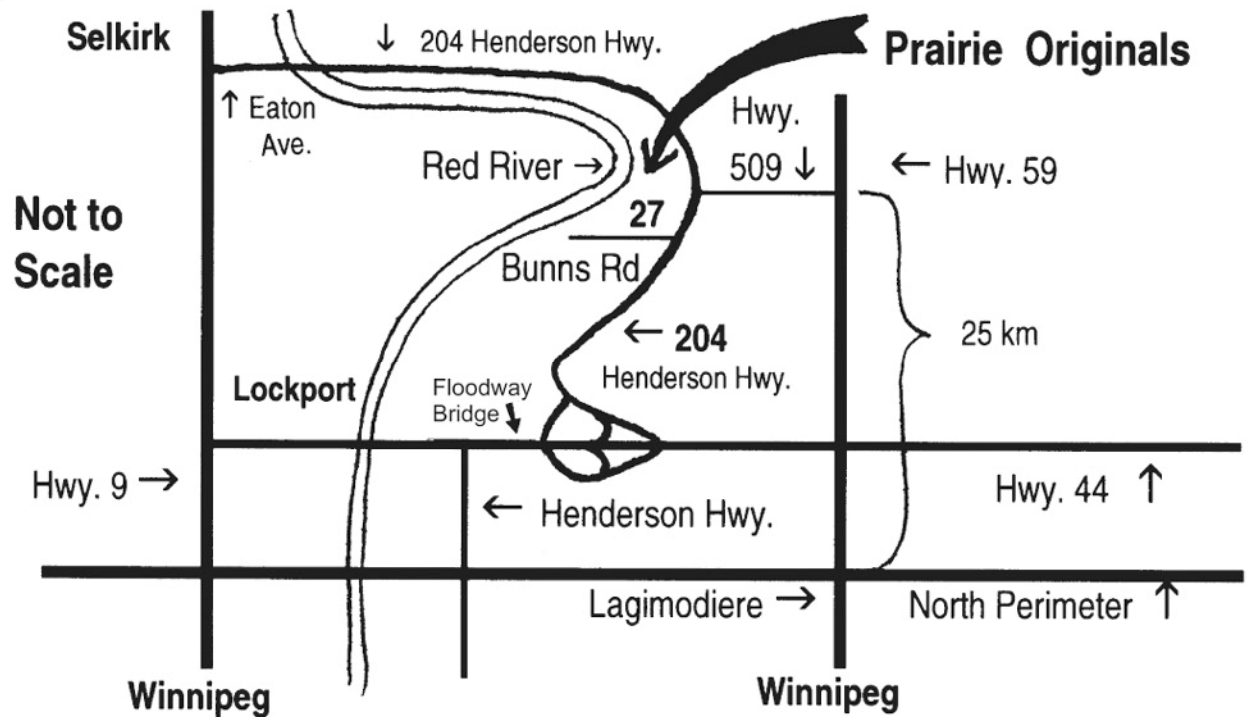
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LOCATION



HOURS

May 12 - June 28	Monday to Friday	10 am - 6 pm
	Saturday	9 am - 5 pm
Evenings by Appointment	Sundays - until June 15	11 am - 5 pm

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

ST. NORBERT FARMERS MARKET

May 24 - mid August Saturday 8 am - 3 pm

Located on Pembina Highway, about 1/2 km south of the perimeter.