



# Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS  
NATIVE GRASSES



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**Wow, spring is here already!**

Winter sure flies by when the skiing is good. Winter allows us at Prairie Originals to rejuvenate, so now we are ready for another rewarding season in the garden. It will be exciting to watch the new prairie areas that we planted the last few years, as they bloom and mature. We uncovered all our over wintering plants on April 15th and they are now coming out of their winter slumber as the weather gradually warms up.

We are **opening for the season on Tuesday, May 12th, MANITOBA DAY**. However, our snow was very late leaving this year and as a result, some varieties may not be ready the week of May 12th. If you are wondering whether specific varieties are ready feel free to give us a call.

At the time of writing this on May 1st, the Selkirk bridge and the Lockport floodway bridge underpass are still closed due to flooding. I hope they will be open by opening day on May 12th but I don't know if they will be. Therefore the best way to come to Prairie Originals for the first week after opening is via Highway 59. See map and call if you wish.

I thought you might like to see some pictures of all the ice chunks left along River Road in St. Andrews after the ice jam in late March.



## WHAT'S BLOOMING NOW ?

Our provincial flower, Prairie Crocus began blooming around April 28th at Prairie Originals. These "Ears of the Earth" are a week or two later than usual.

Prairie Crocus do not come from a bulb like the Dutch Crocus bulbs that you see in garden centres every fall. In fact our Prairie Crocus *Pulsatilla patens ssp. multifida* and Dutch Crocus *Crocus vernus* are not even related! I guess the settlers gave them the same name because they bloomed at the same time as familiar plants back home.

In the wild you often see only one or two flowers per plant but under cultivation it is not uncommon to have 10 – 25 flowers per plant. Prairie Crocus is one of our wildflowers that is a little trickier to grow here in the Red River Valley due to our heavy clay soil. In the wild they are more common in western Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta where the soil is generally more loam or sandier and there is less rainfall. Crocus do not like wet feet. They like very well drained soil. They prefer loam or even sandy or gravel soil. To grow them in our heavy clay "gumbo", add lots of extra sand to your planting spot and make sure they are not planted in low spots that are slow to drain. Also, plant them with other low growing plants that will not shade out the Crocus later in the summer. Excellent companions are Three Flowered Avens, Pussy Toes, and Blue Eyed Grass. They should be in an area that is not regularly watered for other flowers. Full sun is very important too. They are not prolific seeders but I had them seed into my gravel sidewalk and they bloomed there for years.



We don't have a large supply of Crocus pots right now but we have lots of 5 packs of plugs. We will have lots more 4.5" pots of them beginning in early June and throughout the summer and fall.



## "How the Crocus Got Its Fur Coat"

To enter the world of the chiefs, Wapeo, son of a chief was to spend four days and nights atop a lonely hill until a vision of the man he was to be came to him.

The first night no visions appeared to him and he was downhearted. But with the dawn, the warming sun beamed down upon a beautiful flower who opened her petals and nodded toward Wapeo as if to welcome him. Wapeo no longer felt alone.

When night came again, Wapeo curled his body around his new friend to protect her from the icy winds. Three times he did this and three times when the Morning Star rose, visions came to him foretelling of great things to come.

When Wapeo rose to leave he said, "You have comforted and counseled me well these past three days and nights. What three wishes would you have me ask of the Great Spirit?"

"Pray that I may have the purple blue of the distant mountains in my petals, a small golden sun to hold close to my heart on dull days and a furry coat to face the cold winds in the Spring."

The Great Spirit was so pleased with Wapeo's thoughtfulness that he fulfilled all the little plants prayers.

## GARDENING SATURDAY, MAY 9TH

For those of you with itchy gardening fingers this event put on by Friends of Assiniboine Park Conservatory is a great kick off to the gardening season. Their first Gardening Saturday was held last year and it was a great success so they have a bigger event planned this year with 47 displays and many workshops. I will be there with a display and some of the frost hardy plants that can be planted outside immediately. I am also doing a workshop at 10 am on Native Plants in Your Garden and Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Beneficial Bugs.

For more information on Gardening Saturday see [www.friendsconservatory.com](http://www.friendsconservatory.com).

## WE HAVE A NEW WEBSITE

We have always tried to pack as much information as possible into our catalogue but were never able to include photographs. Now you can see pictures of all the plants we grow and get lots of information at [www.prairieoriginals.com](http://www.prairieoriginals.com)



## NEW SEED MIXES FOR 2009

Now that we have more space at our new location we are able to grow more seed. This year we are happy to offer 4 Seed Mixes for various growing conditions. Planning and preparation are very important steps in establishing a prairie. If seeding a wildflower and prairie grass meadow is something you have been thinking about, read our Planting and Seeding Guide on the website for tips on how to get started.

## MANITOBA'S PROVINCIAL GRASS

We have a provincial tree, a provincial flower and a provincial bird so now it is time for a provincial grass. A committee is asking the public to vote for their favourite native grass and the choices are Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Side Oats Grama and Blue Grama. For more information and to vote for your favourite grass go to [www.manitobagrass.ca](http://www.manitobagrass.ca).



## 2009 COLOUR OF THE YEAR

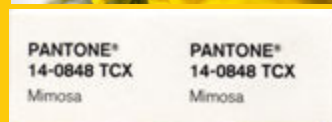
Pantone Selects Color of the Year for 2009: PANTONE 14-0848 Mimosa

*Mimosa Embodies Hopefulness and Reassurance In a Climate of Change*

CARLSTADT, N.J., Dec. 3, 2008 - Pantone, an X-Rite company ( NASDAQ: XRIT ), and the global authority on color and provider of professional color standards for the design industries, today announced PANTONE® 14-0848 Mimosa, a warm, engaging yellow, as the color of the year for 2009. In a time of economic uncertainty and political change, optimism is paramount and no other color expresses hope and reassurance more than yellow.

"The color yellow exemplifies the warmth and nurturing quality of the sun, properties we as humans are naturally drawn to for reassurance," explains Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute®. "Mimosa also speaks to enlightenment, as it is a hue that sparks imagination and innovation."

Best illustrated by the abundant flowers of the Mimosa tree and the sparkle of the brilliantly hued cocktail, the 2009 color of the year represents the hopeful and radiant characteristics associated with the color yellow. Look for women's accessories, home furnishings, active sportswear and men's ties and shirts in this vibrant hue.



We here at Prairie Originals don't grow Mimosa trees, which are from the tropics, but we have a number of prairie flowers in this colour; Black Eyed Susan, False Sunflower, Marsh Marigold, Goldenrods, Gumweed, Gaillardia, and Coneflower. You can be on the cutting edge of fashion all season long with these beauties in your garden.



*Black Eyed Susan*



*Gaillardia*



*False Sunflower*

## MULCHES

Organic mulches are invaluable in the garden. They help conserve moisture and suppress weeds. As mulches gradually break down they add nutrients to the soil and also improve the soil structure making it easier to work with. They just generally make life easier for you and healthier for your garden.

Mulches can be used in vegetable gardens, flower beds, shrub beds and tree beds. They are also very useful in establishing and maintaining native plants in your garden. Whether you apply the mulch before or after planting depends on the size of the plant. When planting our seedling plugs, lay down 2 – 5 cm (1-2”) of mulch and then make holes in the mulch for planting. If planting 4.5” pots or larger I find it easier to plant first and then put down the mulch. Whether you are planting native or cultivated perennials, the plants don't grow very large the first season. They are using most of their energy to grow and establish roots. Without mulch there will be a lot of bare soil between plants which quickly becomes covered with weeds. It takes a lot of time and energy to remove all these weeds so that your new plants have a fighting chance to get established. So save yourself a lot of work and apply the mulch. I find it eliminates about 90% of annual weeds that first year. I use flax straw a lot. It is cheap and it doesn't blow around or float away. It is often available at garden centres in fall because it is also used to cover and protect tender plants over winter and to protect septic fields. Farmers on edges of the city sell bales in fall too. If you are planning a large planting, let me know and I can get extras bales in the fall.

Other options for mulch include wood chips, compost, bark chips, leaves and pea gravel. I have found that a 2 – 5 cm (1-2”) layer of woodchips works very well in perennial beds and around prairie plants. For around shrubs, trees and in paths use 8 – 10 cm (3-4”). Wood chips are usually quite economical too.

Compost has many things going for it. It suppresses weeds very well. I have had compost piles sitting for a whole year with very little weed growth on them. It is excellent at suppressing plant diseases too. Plus it adds nutrients to the soil as well as organic matter. Compost is becoming more available at soil supply companies if you don't have enough of your own.

Bark chips are a durable and attractive mulch. They break down slowly and last longer than wood chips however, they cost more. They are sold by the bag at garden centres and hardware stores. Fine and medium chips are best for smaller plants like perennials. Medium and large chips are fine for shrubs and trees. Keep mulches away from tree trunks to prevent rotting.

I use a lot of Oak leaves on my shady woodland wildflower beds and they are fine in tree and shrub beds too. They look great and they're free! You can use them whole or shredded. I generally apply an 8-10 cm (3-4”) layer in late fall just before the snow flies or even when the snow is falling. The snow settles the leaves and helps prevent them from blowing away in the spring. The plants have no trouble growing up through the leaves in the spring. If your shady wildflower beds are under the trees you save yourself a lot of work because you don't have to rake the leaves after they fall. Leaf mulch is very important for the community of creatures that shares our gardens with us. Spiders, which are beneficial bugs, as well as tree frogs, ladybugs and butterflies all over winter in leaf mulch.

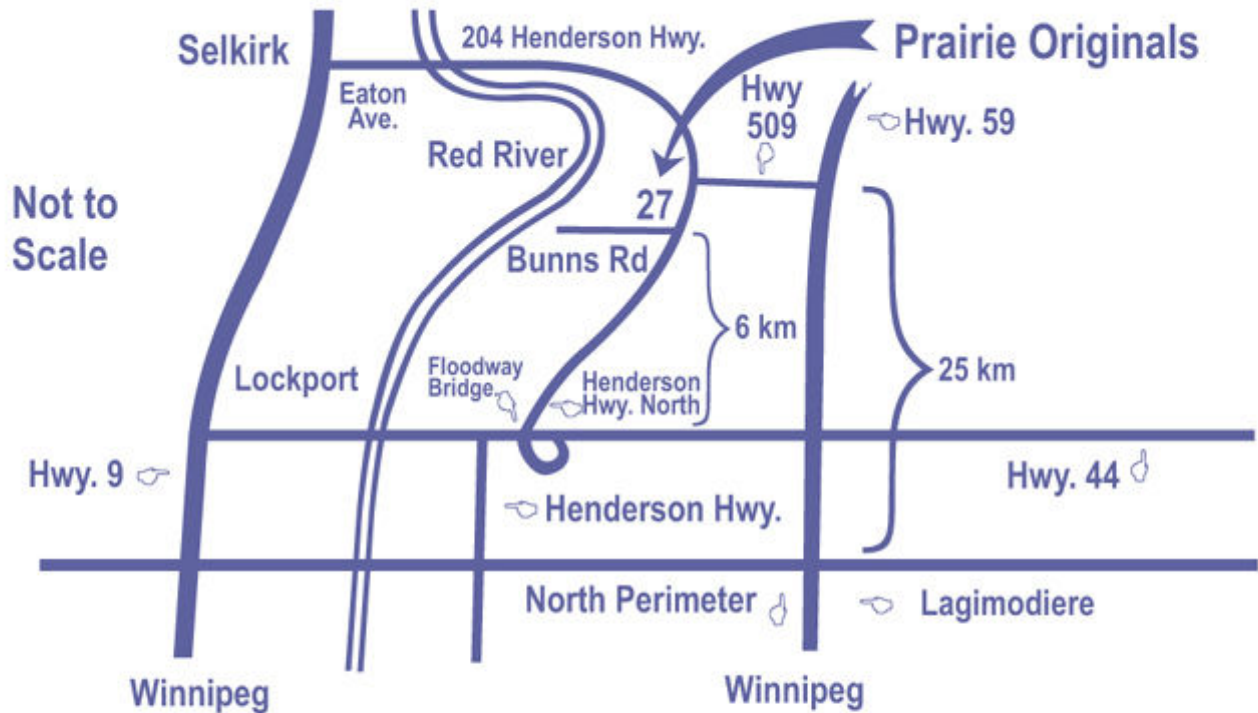
Pea Gravel can also be used for mulch. It doesn't decompose and if slugs are a problem it deters slugs better than wood based mulch. Plants that prefer dry conditions thrive in stone mulches..



Until next time,

*Shirley Froehlich, Stefania Johnson  
& Gwen Donohoe*

# LOCATION



# HOURS

May 12 - June 27

Monday to Friday

10 am - 6 pm

Saturday

9 am - 5 pm

Sundays - until June 15

11 am - 5 pm

July, August & September

Usually open Monday to Saturday, **Phone to confirm**

Evenings by Appointment