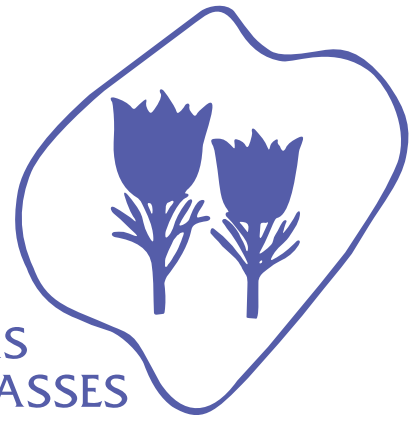




# Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS  
NATIVE GRASSES



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## Natural & Distinctive

September is here already! The Goldenrod and Asters are blooming so fall is on the way. What would fall be without Asters? It certainly would be a less interesting time of year. The Goldenrods would stand alone without a dance partner, some butterflies, birds and insects would be homeless and hungry, and our fields, ditches and gardens would seem quiet, empty and bland without that familiar, final burst of colour before winter. Asters are important to butterflies in several ways. First, the flowers provide lots of nectar late in the season for an assortment of adult butterflies. New England Aster is in the Top Ten of butterfly favourites for nectar. Second, the leaves are breakfast, lunch and dinner for Pearl Crescent butterfly caterpillars. Pearl Crescents are cute little orange butterflies with lots of dark brown markings. Asters also produce abundant seed for the birds to dine on before they fly south for the winter. There are about 15 kinds of Asters in Manitoba. We grow six of them, including Smooth, Many Flowered, Upland White, Western Silvery, Flattop White and New England. Western Silvery Aster is a rare plant in here. One of the few places that it grows in Manitoba is at Bird's Hill Provincial Park. It requires dry, sandier, well drained soil. We are also experimenting with growing Lindley's Aster, which is for the shade.



Upland White



New England



Smooth Aster



Many Flowered Aster

## WHAT'S BLOOMING NOW?

In addition to the Asters and Goldenrods, our warm season grasses look great at this time of year. The Big Bluestem is 5 to 6 feet tall. Imagine what it must have been like in the old days walking through the prairie in the Red River Valley with grasses up to your eyebrows or over your head!! Indian Grass is our other tall grass of the prairies at about 5 feet.



Big Bluestem fall colour



Big Bluestem seedhead



Stef in the Big Bluestem

Don't ask me what my favourite grass is. I can't decide. I love them all.

Two really nice mid size grasses are Little Bluestem and Prairie Dropseed, both growing to about 60 cm tall ( 2 feet). The upright spiky leaves of Little Bluestem become small, bronze swords in the late afternoon light. The soft, round shape of Prairie Dropseed takes on a wonderful pumpkin colour and the seeds, when brushed, emits the fragrance of cilantro.

## BENEFITS OF NATIVE PLANTS

These plants are adapted to our winters and are cold hardy. They do not require covering for the winter. I usually leave the tops standing for the winter to catch the snow. Then in spring they can be cut back to the ground with hedge clippers or simply mowed if it is a larger area. They are also much easier to cut back in the spring because the snow has knocked them down and done half the work for you.

## BIRD & BUTTERFLY NEWS, & OTHER WILDLIFE TOO.

Ruby Throated Hummingbirds - We always seem to have some of these amazing little creatures around. This summer I spotted them visiting the Giant Hyssop, Wild Bergamot, Wild Iris and Wild Columbine. I have found that if you have some of these plants in a place where you are often sitting, such as by your patio or deck or a kitchen or dining room window, you are more likely to see them.

Ladybugs - Have you ever seen baby ladybugs? They are not just miniature versions of the adults. We had some show up this year to eat the aphids that appeared on the Obedient Plant. They look like little alligators. Ladybug larva will eat up to 400 aphids and adults will eat as many as 5,000 more aphids.



Alligator Ladybug larva



Adult Ladybug



Great Spangled Fritillary Butterfly

**Great Spangled Fritillary Butterflies** - There have been a fair number of these around this year. These large, showy butterflies over winter here. The eggs are laid on the food plant, which is violets, in late summer. Caterpillars hatch in late summer and fall. They grow a little bit and then enter a dormant phase to over winter at the base of the plant. In spring they begin feeding on the new foliage at night. The caterpillars are velvety black with orange based black spines.



Pearl Crescent Butterfly

**Monarch Butterflies** - There definitely were very few Monarchs around this summer. Most people reported seeing only a few or none. I saw only two caterpillars this year and I have a lot of Milkweed. The reason for this is not clear, however, it is probably partly related to the weather all along the migration route from Mexico and Texas and up through the Midwestern and Northern United States. We had a cold spring and we haven't had a hot summer. These creatures like the heat and can't fly in cold weather. We haven't had many strong south winds this summer either, which often helps in their migration north to Manitoba. Upon checking the Monarch Watch website, I discovered that the Monarchs are missing from many northern areas of the United States as well this year. For more information on reasons for the missing Monarchs check out [www.monarchwatch.org/blog](http://www.monarchwatch.org/blog). This is a very good Kansas University based website where they do a lot of tracking and research on the Monarchs.

## ST. NORBERT FARMER'S MARKET

I am finished going to the Market for the season, however the Market continues until Thanksgiving with loads of fresh produce and other goodies.

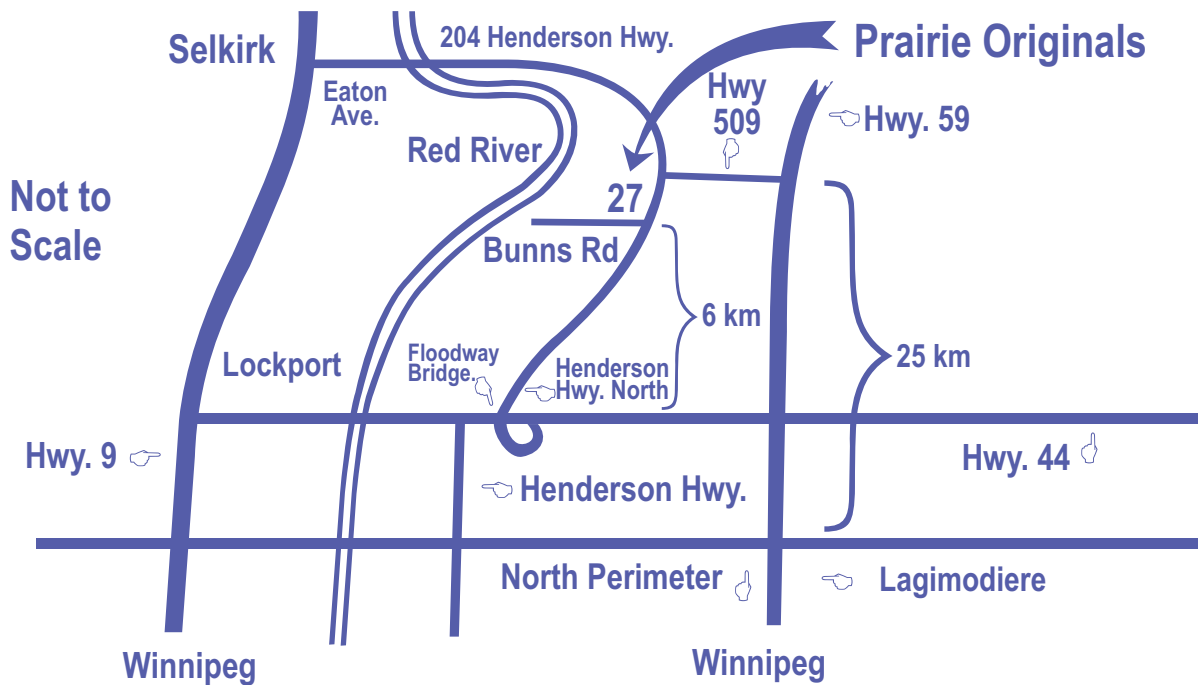
We continue to be open at our home base near Selkirk throughout September and into October. We don't have every variety in stock at this time of year but we do have many varieties available. I often plant a lot of pots at this time of year and I find that they do just fine. You get the jump on spring because the plants start to establish this fall and they continue as soon as the ground warms up in spring. In autumn the best size for planting is the 4.5" pots or the 1 Gallon pots. Many of our native shrubs and vines produce berries so they are great for attracting birds to your garden. We now have in stock some of the shrubs and vines that we ran out of in spring such as Wild Raspberry, Virginia Creeper, Bittersweet Vine and Wild Grape. These are in 4.5" pots.

As always, you are welcome to come out during business hours and stroll through the stockbeds and landscaped areas.

Until next time

Shirley Froehlich & Stef Johnson

# 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