



# Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS  
NATIVE GRASSES



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July is here and our growing season continues to be cool with temperatures for the first week of July predicted to be in the low twenties or cooler. We have had a lot more rain this spring than the past few dry years. In mid-June alone we had over 5 inches (125 mm) in one week. Our prairie plants do just fine with this weather and many are growing very quickly these days with the abundant moisture. The Big Bluestem and Joe Pye in our field were sitting in an inch or two of water for a while but it doesn't bother them a bit. The native shrubs and trees are growing an inch or two a week I think. We do have some dry-loving plants as well and they should be doing OK too as long as they have good drainage for their roots. Lots of coarse sand mixed with the soil at planting time is a good way to improve drainage in our heavy clay soils in the Red River valley for the dry-loving plants.

*Please note : Now that July is here we are closed on Sundays for the rest of the season.*

## What's Blooming Now?

Many of our June blooming flowers are still blooming the first week of July this year due to the late season. These include Northern Bedstraw, Tall Bluebells, Canada Anemone, Solomon's Seal, Red Lily, Heartleaf & Golden Alexander, Prickly Rose and Alumroot. I like the **Alumroot**. It is tough & adaptable. It is a small plant that grows in a clump and lives a long time. It have seen it growing in a wide range of conditions from sand to heavy clay. The flowers are not big and colourful but the clumps of attractive foliage produce lots of flower stems.

They make a nice edging plant, are fine in a group in a perennial garden and are great mixed in a prairie style garden too.



These Alumroots *Heucherarichardsonii* (above/right) are closely related to Coral Bells.

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**Smooth Camas** *Zygadenuselegans* is just starting to bloom in early July this year. It blooms for about 3 weeks. It is a member of the Lily family so it is slower to establish, like other Lily family members. However this also means that it lives a long time. We sell Smooth Camas as second year plugs or in 4.5" pots. It has grass-like leaves at the base of the plant and doesn't get very big so we recommend a 15cm spacing (6"). It is quite an adaptable plant. We have it growing in two locations, one sunny and moist to wet at times like this and the other in a drier, partly shaded location and it grows very well in both locations.

The elegant white flower spikes are a nectar plant for butterflies. Both Smooth Camas and a relative called Death Camas have bulb-like roots. Death Camas bulbs are poisonous. The plants can easily be confused so DO NOT EAT.



Left: Smooth Camas & Red Lily; Center: Smooth Camas in bloom; Right: Smooth Camas; Top Right: Smooth Camas in bloom



## Bird & Butterfly News

We haven't seen a lot of butterflies yet, probably due to the cool weather but we are seeing some. We have seen a fair number of Mourning Cloak butterflies which are dark brown with a cream colored edge on the wings. The host plants for their caterpillars include American Elm, Trembling Aspen and Birch. Tiger Swallowtail butterflies have been sighted as well. These are yellow butterflies with black stripes. Their host plants are also Trembling Aspen and Birch.

We have seen quite a few little blue butterflies. I am not sure if they were Spring Azure (*bottom left*), Silvery Blue (*bottom center*) or Western Tailed Blues (*bottom right*). The Spring Azure host plants are native shrubs & trees such as Nannyberry, Highbush Cranberry, Arrowwood, Narrowleaf Meadowsweet, Sumac, Oak and Dogwood. The host plants for Silvery Blue Butterflies and Western Tailed Blue butterflies are legumes such as Canada Milkvetch.



## Diatomaceous Earth



Diatomaceous Earth is an organic pest control product that has been around a long time. It can be used to kill any undesirable insects with a hard shell. It is not a chemical and is totally non-toxic to mammals. It doesn't harm people or pets or creatures like earthworms. Diatomaceous Earth is a naturally occurring sedimentary rock that is easily crumbled into a fine powder. It is made up of fossilized remains of diatoms, a type of hard shelled algae. Their skeletons are silica, the same thing used to make glass. The silica particles under a microscope look like tiny shards of glass. The sharp particles of diatomaceous earth stick to the insects, work their way under the shell and puncture the body. The insects then dehydrate and die. So the method of killing the undesirable insects is physical rather than chemical. Be sure to use Food Grade Diatomaceous Earth, not Pool or Filter Grade.

For more info see <http://www.earthworkshealth.com> and <http://www.richsoil.com/diatomaceous-earth>

## Fascinating Plants

**Wild Grape** *Vitis riparia* is also known as Riverbank Grape or Frost Grape. This perennial, woody vine is native in Manitoba and all of eastern Canada except Newfoundland as well as most of the mid-western and eastern United States. The leaves are coarsely toothed with irregular lobes. The grapes climb very well and hang on to things by means of tendrils. So they will easily cover a chain link fence or an arbor because they can hang on. If you want them to cover a solid surface such as a fence, you can attach stucco wire to the fence so the vines can hang on. In the wild they grow along fencerows, roadsides, forest edges and along riverbanks.

This hardy vine prefers full sun to light shade. It would not flower or produce fruit in full shade. The leaves turn a golden yellow in fall. I have seen them growing in the riverbank forest at Beaudry Park on the west side of Winnipeg. The tiny white flowers bloom in early summer and the 10 cm (4") grape clusters ripen to dark blue with a whitish bloom in September. Of course birds such as Purple Finches, Robins, Kingbirds, Orioles, Waxwings, and Woodpeckers like to eat them but people can eat them too. They are juicy with a sour or sweet-tart flavour.



The fruit, which is loaded with antioxidants, tastes better after the first frost. You can eat them along the trail as a snack or make, jam, jelly or juice out of them. Their fruit is best for wine when left on the vine until over-ripe and even slightly shrivelled.

The grape leaves have a tangy, citrus taste when used in salads and can be eaten cooked too. In the Mediterranean, Grape leaves are stuffed with rice, meat and spices to make Dolmades. In the Middle East Grape leaves are stuffed with rice, lamb, cinnamon and allspice for a dish called WarakEnab. These are the Grape versions of the cabbage rolls we eat here.

Wild Grapes are a very valuable source of cover for many insects, animals and birds. We had an Eastern Phoebe build a nest in our vine a few years ago. Bumblebees, small bees, and flower flies visit the flowers for pollen. Grape is the host plant for Sphinx Moth caterpillars too.

Caution: Moonseed *Menispermum canadense* is a poisonous vine that looks a little like the grape. You can distinguish Wild Grape from Moonseed by the seed in the fruit. There is one moon-shaped seed in Moonseed and several to many irregular-shaped Safety tiseeds in the fruit of Wild Grape.

## Websites to Explore

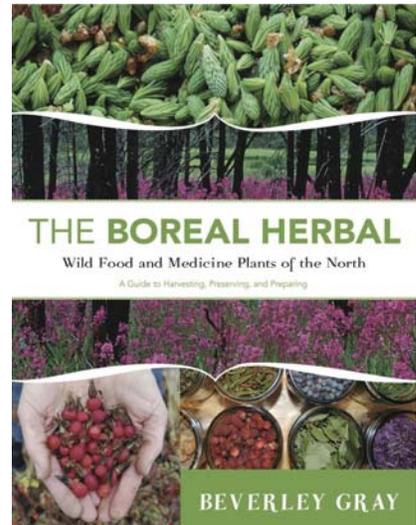
The **Living Prairie Museum** at 2795 Ness Ave in Winnipeg is a very interesting place to explore and so is their website <http://www.winnipeg.ca/publicworks/naturalist/livingprairie>

Be sure to look at the bottom of the page on “Inside Living Prairie” to see all they do and offer. They have a very good prairie book selection too.

## Interesting Books

**The Boreal Herbal, Wild Food and Medicine Plants of the North :  
A Guide to Harvesting, Preserving and Preparing** by Beverley Gray.

The Boreal Herbal is the essential reference book, field guide, how-to manual and cookbook for every Canadian interested in foraging for edible plants, making their own salves and ointments, or simply learning more about the flora of the boreal forest. Whether you're hiking in remote areas or gardening in your backyard, this easy to use hand-book will help you recognize and use fifty-five common wild plants that have extraordinary healing properties. With the Boreal Herbal you will learn how to soothe pain with willow, staunch bleeding with yarrow, treat urinary tract infection with bearberry, and create a delicate uplifting skin cream from sweetgrass.



It contains:

- Instructions on how to gather and preserve wild plants
- More than 200 recipes: teas, tinctures, powders, flower essences, topical treatments, beverages, jams, jellies, baked goods, entrees and much more
- Safety tips for harvesting and using edible and medicinal wild plants, including information on calculating dosage and plant-specific cautions
- A resource section for people interested in starting up a non-timber forest products business
- Botanical & medicinal glossaries, an index and handy reference charts.

Beverly Gray is a boreal herbalist, aromatherapist, natural-health practitioner, journalist, and award winning natural health product formulator. She own Aroma Borealis Herb Shop in Whitehorse, Yukon.



Until next time,

**Shirley Froehlich, Kelly Leask,  
Elizabeth Worden, Greg Allan  
and Kirsten Hooper**



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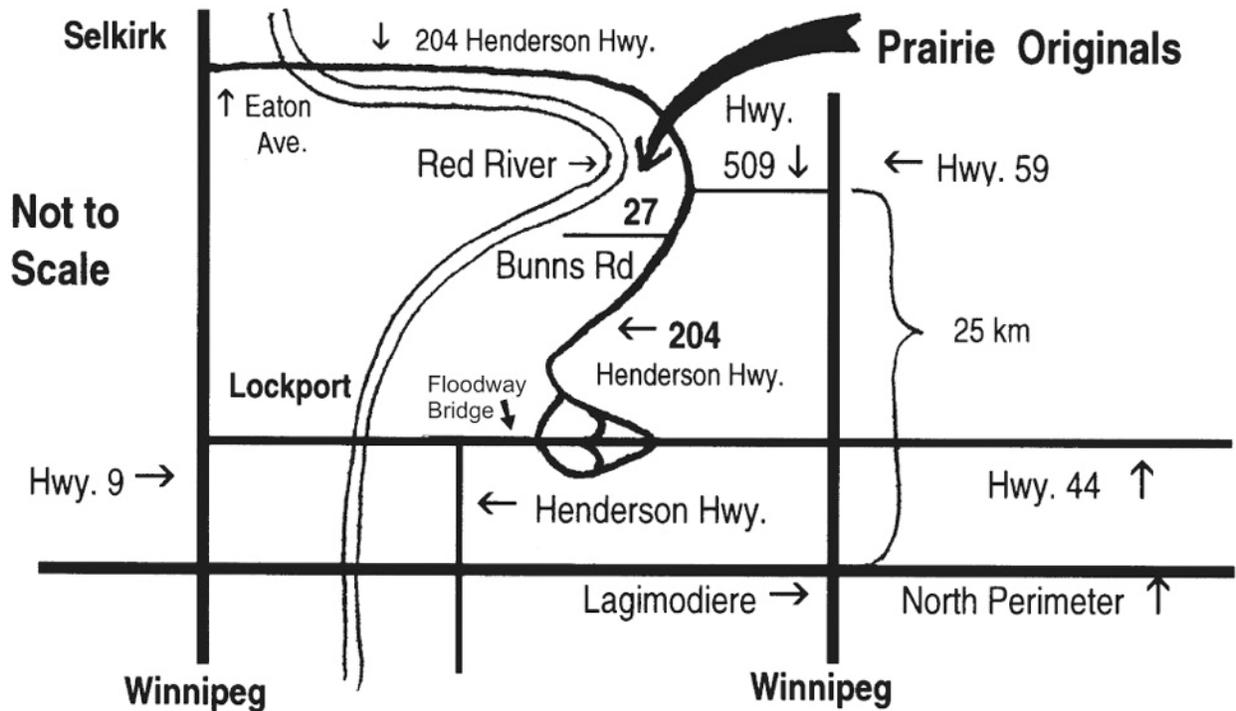
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## LOCATION



## HOURS

May 12 - June 28	Monday to Friday	10 am - 6 pm
	Saturday	9 am - 5 pm
<b>Evenings by Appointment</b>	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.