



# Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS  
NATIVE GRASSES



27 Bunns Rd., Box 25, Grp. 310, RR 3, Selkirk, MB. R1A 2A8  
Phone/Fax 204-785-9799 Toll Free 1-866-296-0928  
<http://prairieoriginals.com> Email [shirley@prairieoriginals.com](mailto:shirley@prairieoriginals.com)



find us on  
**Facebook**

What can I say ? It was cold! It's still cold! Even colder than last spring it seems. If we are lucky it will be warm by the time you read this. Hope springs eternal. We can still dream of warm weather and lush green foliage and beautiful flowers. And when the heat comes, the plants will sprout those green shoots of promise and grow very quickly. We will be ready.

## What's Blooming Now?

Well actually, nothing is blooming as I write this on May 2. The crocus have stuck their furry necks and heads out of the ground but have stayed firmly shut at our place. We will let you know on our Facebook page when they start opening.

We do have other plants that bloom in May. Visit any dry prairie in Manitoba and you will likely find Pussy Toes, *Antennariaparvifolia* blooming in springtime. This common prairie groundcover with silvery, grey leaves usually blooms in mid to late May (*pictures below*). Probably late May this year. And the flowers really do look like pussy feet! As the days pass the flower stems gradually grow longer until they are around 15 cm tall (6"). Then the seed ripens and the resulting fluff with tiny little seeds looks like a cloud floating above the plants.

Note the American Painted Lady butterfly caterpillar in the picture on right. These caterpillars are very picky eaters. For this reason the adult butterflies will only lay eggs on Pussy Toes, Pearly Everlasting and occasionally Prairie Sage and Ironweed. Though it has been observed in many parts of Manitoba, the American Painted Lady butterfly is not considered common. The best way to see these fascinating butterflies and caterpillars is to have some of their host plants in your garden.



## Opening Day



We open for the season on Monday, May 12. Our staff for this season are Kelly Leask, Elizabeth Worden, Greg Allan, Kirsten Hooper and myself, Shirley Froehlich. We are open 7 days a week until June 15 and then Monday to Saturday until October. We are happy to answer your questions and help choose plants appropriate for your growing conditions. Let us introduce you to the wonderful world of native plants and the life that surrounds them such as beneficial bugs, pollinators, butterflies, birds & bees.

### Bird, Butterfly & Creature News

Believe it or not, I have already seen a butterfly this spring, in mid April. It was a Milbert's Tortoiseshell (*photo on right*). These butterflies, along with Morning Cloaks overwinter as adults under leaf litter, piles of rocks or wood, in tree cavities or among evergreen vegetation. So just don't tidy up too much in fall so they have a bed for the winter.

Black Swallowtail butterflies overwinter as a chrysalis attached to a twig. We have one in an aquarium in our unheated store, where it has been all winter. We are expecting to see it hatch into a fresh new butterfly sometime in May.

Stay tuned...



Here is an update on the Monarch Population Status from <http://www.monarchwatch.org>:

*"The overwintering numbers are in from Mexico and once again it's bad news. The total area occupied by monarch colonies at overwintering sites in Mexico this past winter was a mere .67 hectares, down from the previous all-time low of 1.19 hectares last year.*

*.....Monarch numbers will rebound but only if the weather allows AND there is enough milkweed to increase the population. While we will never get back to the large populations of the 1990's there is still enough milkweed to produce monarchs in sufficient numbers to colonize 3-4 hectares of the forests in Mexico. However, given the current size of the overwintering population it is likely that it will take 2-3 years with relatively favorable breeding conditions for the population to attain such numbers."*

So you know what to do – PLANT MILKWEED !

For more information on the importance of monarch conservation

check out this article

<http://www.monarchwatch.org/blog/2014/01/importance-of-monarch-conservation>





## St Norbert Farmer's Market

Opening Day is Saturday, May 24, a week earlier than last year. Kelly, who you met at the Market last year, and I will be there this year taking turns. We take a whole selection of plugs and pots but we don't take seed or shrubs unless by request. We simply don't have room in the truck. And of course we are also open at our Bunns Road store with larger quantities of plants, more staff and a chance to see what's blooming, hear the birds singing, and perhaps see other interesting creatures.

### New for 2014

Silverweed *Argentina anserinai*s a low growing ground cover 5 – 15 cm tall (2-6") with yellow flowers from June to August and attractive foliage. It establishes and spreads easily with runners in all directions like Strawberries. The runners then root to form new plants. It grows in all types of soils from sand to gravel to clay and does just fine in sun or shade. It grows very well in medium to wet soil conditions. Its native habitat is Wet Meadow, Prairie Field, Riparian and Salt Water Shorelines.



All this tells you that Silverweed is one tough and adaptable plant and salt tolerant too. This makes it good for erosion control and for difficult sites where it is hard to get anything else to grow. We have seen it growing in the wild in such diverse habitats as sandy road edges in Gimli, gravelly parking lots in Grand Beach where it is driven on, and also mixed with grasses in wet ditches with good clay soil.

It forms carpets of attractive green leaves which are silver on the back. Silverweed is native around the world in northern countries and has an interesting history. In western Scotland, its starchy roots are said to have saved entire villages from starvation during famines. Raw, boiled or roasted, the spring roots have been likened to parsnips, chestnuts and sweet potatoes. Medicinally, it was used mainly as an astringent in gargles, washes and teas for reducing inflammation and stopping bleeding of the digestive tract, kidneys and skin.

Silverweed may be too aggressive for small, town and city properties but it is well suited for difficult sites, saline areas, erosion control, disturbed areas, at cottages, and moist to wet sites, etc.

It is available in 4 pks of XL plugs for \$17.50 or in trays of 32 plugs for \$120, or \$112 if two or more trays are purchased.



## Fascinating Plants

**Solomon's Seal** *Polygonatum biflorum* is one of our native woodland plants that is a great candidate for our gardens. These long lived plants prefer part or full shade. Their interesting foliage stays looking great all season long and is complimented by white flowers dangling from beautifully arching stems in June. Navy blue berries follow in July. It grows 75 – 90 cm tall (2 ½ -3 ft.) and spreads slowly by roots. Since it spreads quite slowly, it is well behaved in the garden. We have had a bed of it in our shadehouse for the last 8 years and it has stayed where we put it, without straying into the pathways. It has a more quickly spreading relative, **Star Flowered Solomon's Seal**, *Smilacinastellata* where we dig the wanderers every 3 -4 years.

Solomon's Seal does very well in our heavy clay soils but it is adapted to drier, sandier soil as well. Like many woodland plants it appreciates rich, organic soil, so before planting, it is a good idea to mix generous amounts of organic matter such as peat moss, leaves or compost into the soil. We mulch all of our woodland plants every year in October or November with about 10 cm (4") of Oak leaves. These leaves look great as the plants grow up through them in spring, they improve the soil as they break down, and they do a tremendous job of preventing weeds from growing.

In the wild Solomon's Seal is fairly common in moist to dry woodlands in southern Manitoba, S.E. Saskatchewan, southern Ontario, Quebec and the eastern half of the United States. I have seen it growing near Selkirk, at Bird's Hill Park near Winnipeg and near Carman, Manitoba.

Solomon's Seal makes a gorgeous tall groundcover under shade trees, on the shady side of buildings or as a group in shady flower beds. If you are tired of mowing grass and raking leaves under the trees, you can plant these plants 1 foot apart under the trees. Simply mulch the area before planting with something like flaxstraw or woodchips. This keeps the weeds down and helps hold moisture. Over 3 – 5 years the plants will fill in to form a beautiful, lush woodland garden that doesn't need mowing. In autumn let the falling leaves remain on the plants to top up the mulch every year. Leaves are great spider habitat too. Spiders are beneficial bugs that feed on insect pests in the garden. They help to keep the garden in balance. Leaf litter also provides a home for overwintering butterflies. There is no raking required in a woodland garden!



Top: Solomon's Seal  
Center: Solomon's Seal in the fall  
Bottom: Solomon's Seal Berries in fall

## Websites to Explore

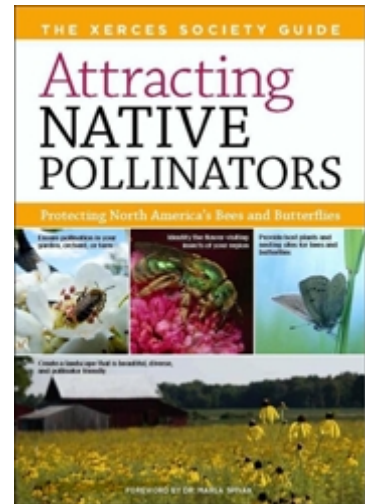
The <http://www.monarchwatch.org> website will tell you everything you ever wanted to know about Monarch butterflies. It covers topics such as biology, rearing Monarchs, butterfly gardening, conservation, research projects, and classroom projects. The website originates at University of Kansas, where the bulk of research and monitoring of populations is done.

<http://www.journeynorth.org> is also very interesting. This site focuses on how sunlight and seasonal change affects all life around us, from plants to animals and their season migrations. People report their sightings of migratory species to this website and they are all compiled and showed on real time migration maps. Some species tracked include Hummingbirds, Whooping Cranes, Robins, Grey Whales, Bald Eagles and Monarch Butterflies. There is lots of information on these species too.

These two websites provide lots of information and are wonderful resources. Both also have Facebook pages.

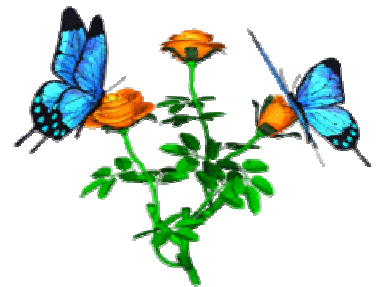
## Interesting Books

**Attracting Native Pollinators : Protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies** by the Xerces Society is a fabulous book. Professor Marla Spivak of the University of Minnesota says this about the book. *"This book is much more than a resource on how to improve habitat for native pollinators. It is a step by step guide for changing our stewardship of the earth; it is a tangible way for people of all ages to make a difference. Active participation in this vital, grass roots revolution is easy: Plant flowers. Sure, by creating floral and nesting habitat, bees, butterflies and countless other wildlife species will prosper. But through this same simple effort, you will be ensuring an abundance of locally grown, nutritious fruits and vegetables. You will beautify our cities, roadways, and countryside. You will be helping to spread the word about the urgent need to reduce pesticide use, while at the same time creating habitat for beneficial insects that prey upon crop pests. You will be increasing natural diversity and ecological resilience through pollinator gardens, bee pastures, and flowering field borders that stabilize the soil, filter water runoff, and pack carbon into the roots of native prairie plants. For many of our earth's current environmental ills, you will be part of the solution."*



Until next time,

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





# Prairie Originals

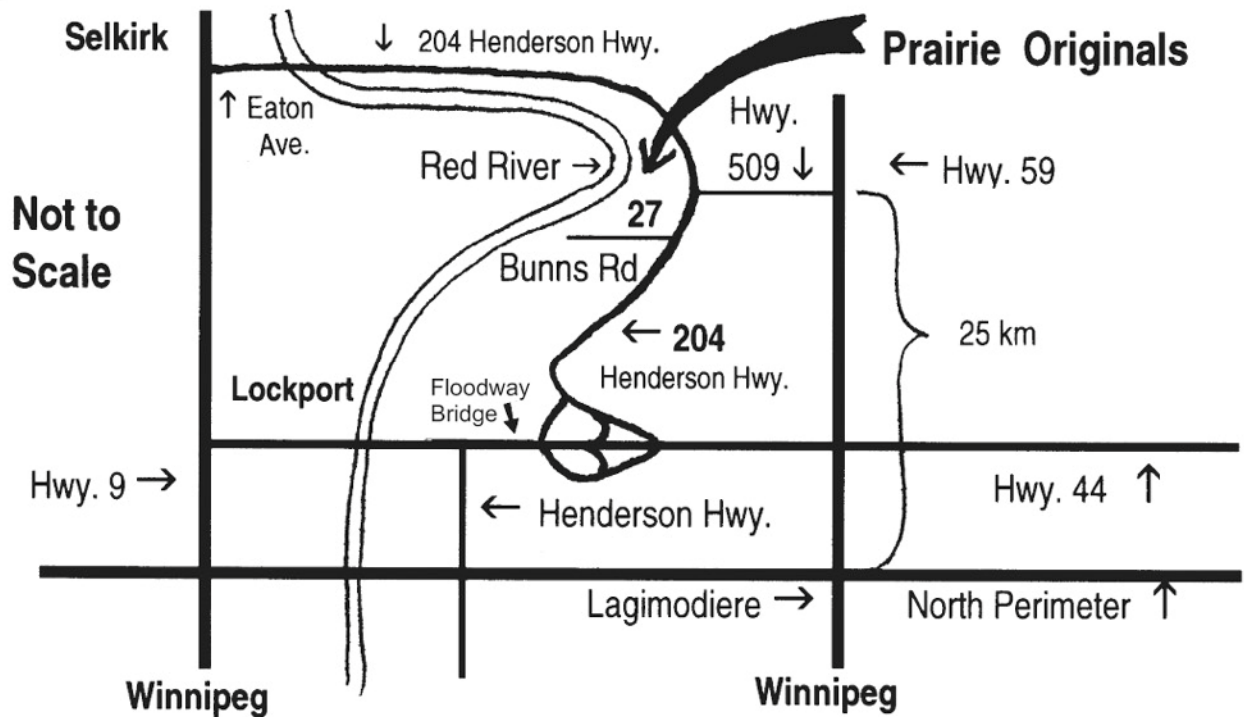
WILDFLOWERS  
NATIVE GRASSES



[www.prairieoriginals.com](http://www.prairieoriginals.com)

27 Bunns Rd, Box 25, Grp. 310, RR 3, Selkirk, Manitoba R1A 2A8  
Phone / Fax (204) 785-9799 Toll Free 1-866-296-0928 [shirley@prairieoriginals.com](mailto:shirley@prairieoriginals.com)

## 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.