



# Prairie Originals

WILDFLOWERS  
NATIVE GRASSES



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**Facebook**

## May 2016



The mild winter seemed to go by very quickly for us and now we are back in the swing of the growing season. We enjoyed watching many redpolls, chickadees, downy woodpeckers and white-breasted nuthatches visit the bird feeders over the winter. The spring migration has been exciting with the sights and sounds of dark-eyed juncos, white throated sparrows, fox sparrows, song sparrows, robins, pelicans, gulls, meadow larks and, of course, geese.

We have been busy preparing for our opening day. With the warm weather we have been experiencing lately the plants are growing quickly and gardeners are starting to get the itch to begin planting. We have our fingers crossed for no snow storms in May this year!

## Opening Day & St. Norbert Farmers' Market

We opened on Thursday, May 12 this year. It was a cold, windy, rainy day, but we were happy to see a few hearty customers. We are now open Monday to Friday 10:00-6:00, Saturdays 9:00-5:00 and Sundays 11:00-5:00. We will be closed on Sundays after June 12. Our staff this year is Kirsten, Ruth, Shawnee, Evan and Kelly. We will be happy to help you make plant selections and answer your questions.

The first outdoor farmers' market of the season at St. Norbert will be Saturday, May 21, 8:00-3:00. We are looking forward to catching up with everyone at the market and hoping for fine weather.

If you would like to make arrangements to pick up plant or seed orders at St. Norbert please let us know by the Thursday before your preferred pick-up day at the latest.



# What's Blooming Now?



Our full staff started on May 2nd, just in time to catch the crocuses in full bloom. They began blooming on April 18. It is fun to watch the bees gather pollen from the sunny, warm crocus centers and they must have done a good job of pollinating because seed heads are beginning to form.

The early blue violets and western Canada violets started blooming the first week of May this year, along with the marsh marigolds and bloodroot. The pussy toes and downy yellow violets are also starting to put on a nice show.

The trees and shrubs are getting in on the action, too. The pussy willows and hazelnuts have catkins and the wild plums and saskatoons have begun to flower.



If you would like to see what is blooming around here please follow us on Instagram @prairieoriginals!

## Photos:

*Top Right: Crocus with bee,  
Top Left: Marsh marigolds,  
Bottom Right: Saskatoon flower  
Bottom Left: Wild plum flower,  
Far Bottom: Hazelnut catkins*





## Bird, Butterfly and Creature News

The reports on the number of monarch butterflies overwintering in Mexico this winter indicated that the butterflies were occupying 4.01 hectares of forest, a significant increase from their all-time population low two years ago when they covered only 0.67 hectares. This is great news, but there is still a long way to go to help the monarch population return to its historic averages. Let's keep planting milkweed! Together we are making a difference!

The monarch overwintering colonies start breaking up to leave Mexico on their northward migration in March. Native milkweeds in Manitoba are heat loving plants that are slow to sprout in the spring, but they will be starting to grow by the time the migrating monarchs make their way this far north.

We have seen a fair number of butterflies in the last couple of weeks. Most were medium-sized orange ones. One stayed still long enough for us to identify it as an Eastern Comma. We have spotted a few small white butterflies as well. Evan found a small fritillary caterpillar in the shade house on May 9th.

*Left: Eastern Comma Butterfly, Right: Fritillary caterpillar*



# Meet the Bees

There has been a fair amount of media attention recently over the falling populations of both honeybees and native bees. Several theories have been suggested to explain the lack of buzzing bees in fields and gardens. The cause of the problem is most likely a combination of habitat loss compounded with excessive use of agricultural chemicals, including pesticides used to coat seeds of flowering plants produced for the greenhouse industry.

At Prairie Originals we are pleased to offer plants that we grow from our own seed, which is produced on site at our location near Selkirk, MB. Our seed is grown, harvested and stored without the use of chemicals.

Just as there are many different native flowers, there are many different types of native bees. The best way to support struggling bee populations is by providing them with a diverse array of flowers that bloom at different times in the season, starting with early spring and continuing through fall. Ask your local garden centers about what kind of chemicals have been applied to the plants and seeds so you can make informed decisions about your purchases and avoid accidentally poisoning the bees you might be trying to help.

This summer we are going to introduce you to some of the different types of native bees.

## Bumble Bees *Bombus* spp.

The majority of bee species in the world are solitary bees, but bumble bees, like honey bees, are social and live in colonies. Unlike honey bee queens that generally stay in the hive and just lay lots of eggs, queen bumble bees leave the nest regularly, particularly in spring, to forage for pollen and nectar in addition to laying eggs and rearing their brood.



The queen bumble bee is the only one in a colony that survives the winter, typically in a burrow in the ground. She emerges in the spring and goes in search of a good spot to build a nest in or near the ground, like an old rodent nest.

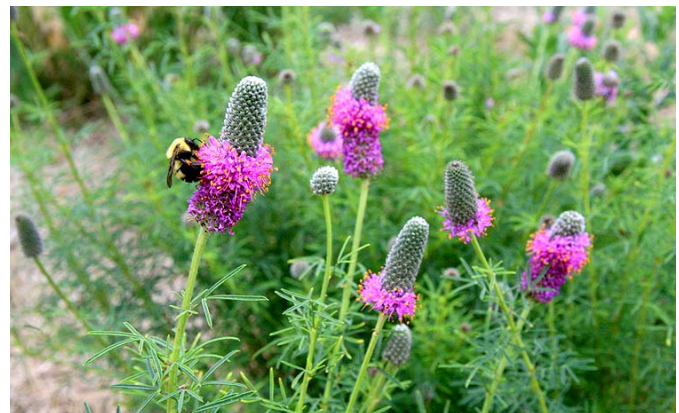
Prairie dropseed (*photo on right*) is a beautiful clump grass that can provide suitable nesting habitat for bumble bees.



Since the bumble bee queens emerge early in the season and they need to forage to provision their nests and raise their offspring, early blooming plants are vital to their survival.

If you see an exceptionally large bumble bee early in the spring it is a safe bet that she is a queen. Worker bumble bees are all female. Male bees are only produced late in the season so they can mate with the future queens before the whole colony except the new queens dies in the fall.

Bumble bees are generalist pollinators so they gather pollen and nectar from a variety of plants. They are able to communicate with each other to share information about where and how to forage. Bumble bees are able to use buzz pollination to extract pollen from difficult to access flowers by clinging to part of the flower and activating their flight muscles so the entire flower vibrates and pollen is dislodged. They are also quite strong so they are able to force their way into closed flowers such as bottle gentians. They can forage up to one mile away from their nests.





## Interesting Book

**Laura Reeves' Guide to Useful Plants** by: Laura Reeves

*"For over 20 years, I have been striving to incorporate as many wild plants into my daily life as possible. This 216-page book is a collection of my experiences with over 65 wild plants and mushrooms. It is packed full of stories of my experiments (some successful and some not), accidental discoveries, recipes, and directions for using plants for food, medicine, wilderness survival, and just plain fun.*

*"Want to know how to make the best roasted dandelion roots ever? Wondering which plant will be your best friend during cold and flu season? With over 285 colour photos and 30 recipes, Laura Reeves' Guide to Useful Plants will bring you up to speed on identifying, sustainably harvesting and skillfully preparing some of the most intriguing wild plants and mushrooms of the northern prairie and boreal forest – from acorns to zoomsticks!"*



Laura Reeves, founder of Prairie Shore Botanicals, is a botanist with over 20 years experience. She received her BSc. (Botany) from the University of Manitoba in 1997. Since 1994, she has attended 8 courses at Tom Brown's Tracking, Nature and Wilderness Survival School in New Jersey, including the Standard, Advanced Standard, Advanced Tracking and Awareness, Caretaker and Philosophies 1-4 . She has also taken the home- based Kamana Naturalist Training Program through Wilderness Awareness School (Washington).

## Fascinating Plants

**Bloodroot** *Sanguinaria canadensis* is a beautiful, low-growing, spring blooming woodland plant. It is one of the earliest flowers to bloom at Prairie Originals, soon after the crocuses. Its leaves are large with lobed edges. When the leaves first emerge they wrap around the stems that bear single flowers with 8-12 white petals and yellow centers. Eventually the leaves uncurl to become flat. If the leaves are torn they bleed red-orange sap from the wound.

The rhizomes ooze a red juice when broken which gives the plant its name. Bloodroot rhizomes have been used medicinally to treat a variety of ailments. The red extract from the rhizomes can be used as a dye.



*Bloodroot  
Emerging  
In spring*

*Continued on page 6...*

*Continued from page 5...*

Bloodroot has an interesting adaptation to surviving as a plant that blooms in the dynamic conditions of spring in Manitoba. The fluctuating temperature means that pollinator activity can be inconsistent in April and May, so after a few days of blooming the male parts of the flower start bending toward the female part of the flower so the plant can pollinate itself.



*Left: Bloodroot Flower*

*Right: Bloodroot Leaves*

Many woodland plants are challenging to propagate from seed, but we are working on figuring out how to grow bloodroot. This year we had good germination on a seed bed that was planted in 2012, so we are hopeful that we might be able to offer bloodroot for sale in the future. Although it is more common in eastern North America, it is a rare plant in Manitoba so we would like to create an opportunity for people to help conserve this plant by growing it in their gardens.



**Until next time,**

**Kelly Leask, Kirsten Hooper, Ruth Thiessen,  
Shawnee Isaak, Evan Balzer and Shirley Froehlich**





# Prairie Originals

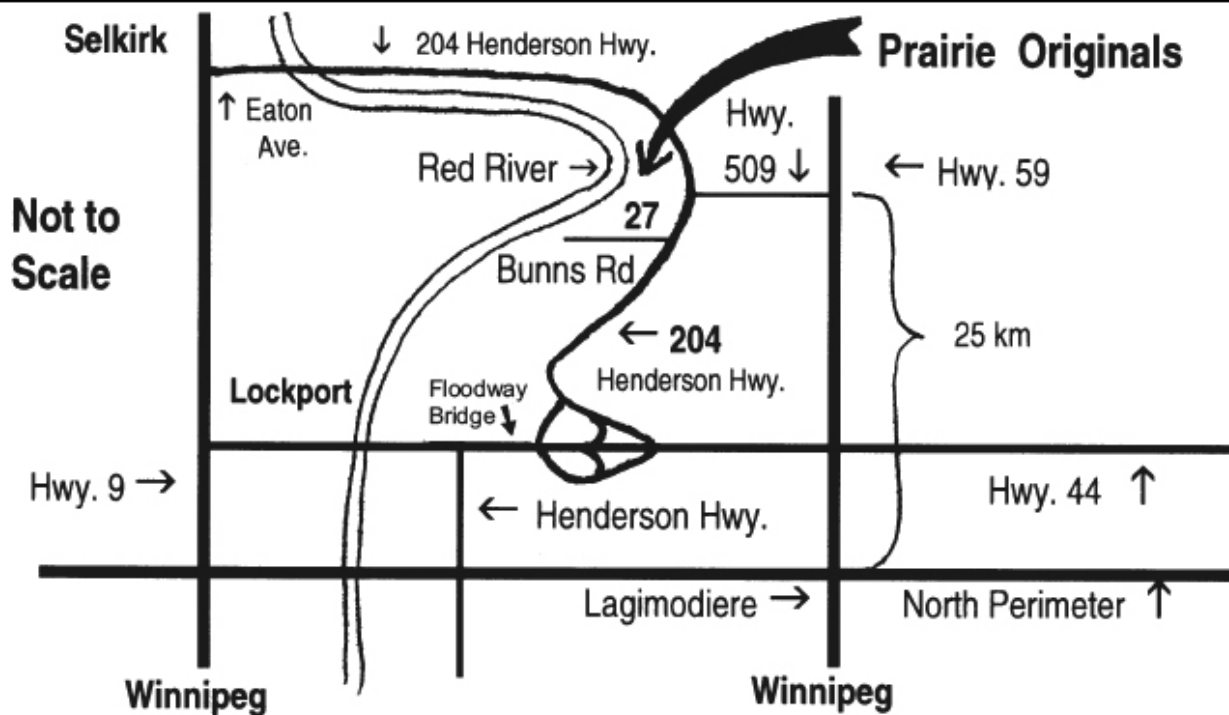
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## LOCATION



## HOURS

May 12 - June 30	Monday to Friday	10 am - 6 pm
	Saturday	9 am - 5 pm
Evenings by Appointment	Sundays - until June 12	11 am - 5 pm

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

## ST. NORBERT FARMERS MARKET

May 21 - mid August	Saturday	8 am - 3 pm
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Located on Pembina Highway, about 1/2 km south of the perimeter.