

Special Summer Wildflowers.

Our farm has a great range of habitats from river to ponds to peat bog to tamarack swamp to low woodland to savanna to sandy open pastures.

Hundreds of wildflower types grow here.

I encourage them of course, but the terrifically varied habitats of the farm are the primary factor.

I have posted wildflower articles in past years.

I think you can scroll back and find those photos and writings.

In this posting I am presenting only a few plants.

The first photo is of our Lady Slipper.

The Lady Slipper is a strikingly beautiful orchid. It is the Minnesota State Flower.

Its full common name is "Pink and White Lady Slipper". Its botanical name is "Cypripedium Reginae". Lady Slippers are common in northern Minnesota but rare in the central and southern areas of the state. In fact, according to a DNR fact sheet, the one on our farm is the only "known"



Lady Slipper in Sherburne County.

Orchids are a primitive and ancient plant type.

In general, they are difficult to grow.

They are very long-lived. Lady Slippers first bloom at about 16 years of age.

The plants can live to be 100 or more.

Our Lady Slipper appears to be well over 70 years old. It has about ten stocks that grow from rhizomes.

Depending on weather, it produces between 16 and 24 blossoms.

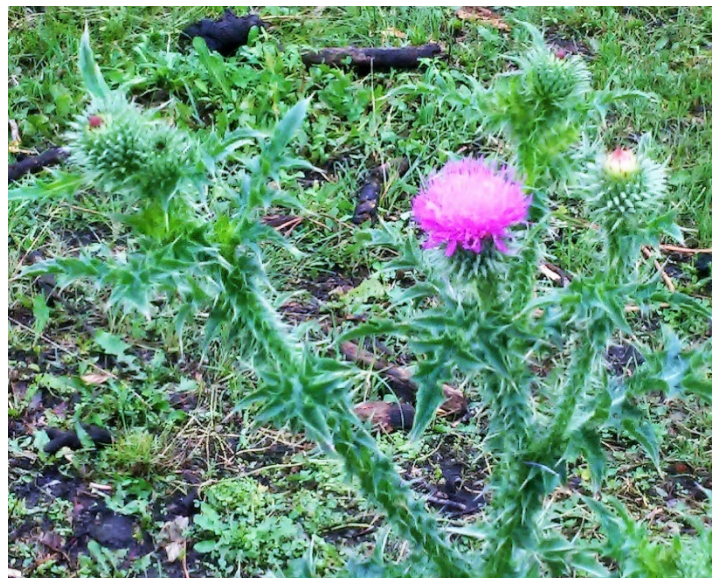
The second photo is a Bull Thistle.

The Bull Thistle is an invasive plant from Europe. It has many beautiful, delicate blossoms, which are unfortunately surrounded by long, prickly spines.

It is a biennial, meaning it is vegetative in its first year. In its second year it reaches full size, up to six feet tall, and produces flowers.

Bull thistles tend to grow in groups. They are not as difficult to control as most other thistle types. The cattle and bison will eat the leaves when the plants are young.

That alone keeps the thistle population in good balance.



They are actually attractive plants with gorgeous flowers. And, of course, they produce “thistle seed”. Thistle seed is a favored food of small birds. It is common to see thistle plants swarming with Gold Finches late in the summer.

The third photo is of a simple field mint.

At least six varieties of wild mint and three varieties of wild sage grow on our farm.

Field mint, peppermint, spearmint, catnip and more.

The leaves of most mints are thick with ragged edges.

Sages often have thin, light-grey leaves.

All the mints and sages are perennials.

I love to pull a leaf and crush it in my fingers.

The delightful scent can stay on my hands for hours.

One of our sages, “Worm Wood” has an especially pungent aroma. Some of our family members like it. Some do not.

It is perhaps an acquired taste.

I like it.

Worm Wood is an invasive European plant.

The animals eat it occasionally.

The old timers said it was a natural wormer for cattle and sheep.

I believe it is.

The last photo is “Butterfly Weed”.

It produces a brilliant orange flower.

Butterflies do love it.

Butterfly weed is a member of the Milk Weed family. All Milk Weeds are long-lived perennials.

The Common Milk Weed, the one that Monarch Butterflies depend on is very common here.

Milk weeds produce digitalins which are akin to digitalis, a heart stimulant. That is the source of the poisonous reputation of Milk Weeds.

Like most natural toxins, it is medicinal in small quantities and only poisonous in excess.

The grazing animals eat Milk Weeds readily, without ill effect.

This is an incredibly beautiful summer. To

