

***Silphium laciniatum* – Compass Plant**

COMMON NAME: Compass Plant

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Silphium laciniatum* - comes from Greek *silphion* referring to a resinous juice and Latin *laciniatum* for “cut” or “lacerated” leaf edges

FLOWER: A cluster of yellow flowers, each 2 – 4 inches across. The individual flowers have multiple yellow rays and a center disk around an inch wide.

BLOOMING PERIOD: June to August

SIZE: Tall, 3 to 7 feet

BEHAVIOR: This tall plant has interesting basal leaves, stiff and deeply cut. The leaves may be upwards of 20 inches long and about 10 inches across at the widest part. The leaves get smaller higher on the stem. Many times the leaves tend to orient themselves in a north-south direction to reduce the effect of full midday sunshine, hence the name.

SITE REQUIREMENTS: Grows on rich to moderately dry soils in full sun. Will tolerate a poor soil. Dry to medium moisture requirement.

NATURAL RANGE: Prairie areas. East of the Mississippi these have mostly disappeared except for Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The range reaches west to where the moisture is insufficient, so it's found only in the eastern parts of Kansas and Nebraska, for example. In Wisconsin compass plant used to be found along roadsides and railroad embankments, but has generally disappeared from those areas.

SPECIAL FEATURES: This plant has a tremendous taproot. Native Americans used the gummy, bitter resin from broken stems as a mouth cleansing chewing gum. The flowers attract butterflies and the seeds are favored by goldfinches.

SUGGESTED CARE: Water well during the first season. Plants may not flower for several years. When they do flower, staking may be needed in garden settings.

COMPANION PLANTS: Big bluestem, heath and smooth asters, rattlesnake master, showy sunflower, yellow star grass, round-headed bush clover, purple prairie clover, yellow coneflower, rosinweed, prairie dock, stiff goldenrod and prairie dropseed