

## NATIVE PERENNIALS

### Sunflower, Maximilian 'MedicineCreek'

*Helianthus maximiliani*

Native. Showy yellow flowers. Prefers moist soil. Grows along streams, sloughs, road ditches, and moist prairies. Large rain garden plant. Leaves folded lengthwise and curve downward. Produces seeds favored by small birds. Grows 3-6 ft. tall.

**Description:** Maximilian sunflower is a perennial forb spreading from short, thick rhizomes. Upright stems, typically 3 to 8 feet tall, appear in tight clusters or colonies. Showy flower heads with yellow rays to 1-1/2 inch long appear in mid to late summer in clusters from leaf axils along the stem and at the stem tip. This sunflower can be separated from others by its distinctive leaves which are commonly folded and lengthwise and curved downward. Blades are 4 to 6 inches long, rough on the upper surface, and tapered from the middle to both ends.

**Distribution/Habitat:** This showy sunflower grows naturally in prairies east of the Rocky Mountains from southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba to Texas and in some eastern states. As an associate of the Great Plains big bluestem communities, it prefers moist sites on heavier soils. Although it is more abundant in eastern South Dakota than western, it is found along streams, near springs, irrigation and road ditches, and wet areas in the western part, possibly in every county.

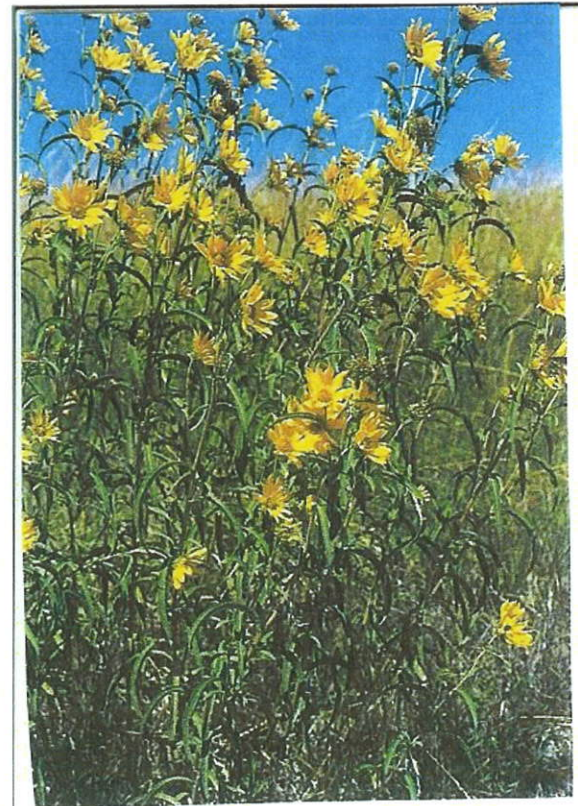
**Comments:** Maximilian sunflower is a palatable livestock and wildlife forage. Unlike its annual relatives, its presence is an indicator of well managed range. Chickadees, finches, nuthatches, and other small birds flock to its seeds as they ripen. Maximilian sunflower is very showy, towering over grasses and remaining green when many prairie forbs have matured and lost their beauty.

**Credit:** James E. Johnson & Gary E. Larson, Grassland Plants of South Dakota and the Northern Great Plains. SDSU, Brookings, SD. B-566 (rev.) August 1999. Page 122.

**Photo Credit:** USDA-NRCS Plant Database and SDSU Ag Experiment Station



USDA-NRCS Plant Database



SDSU Ag Experiment Station