

Providing Food for the Long Flight



Do you suffer from allergies? When you hear the word “Goldenrod” do you almost sneeze? Do you dread the yellow blooms that are appearing everywhere this time of the year? Did you know that Goldenrod is an innocent victim of a long-standing myth!

Goldenrods bloom at the same time and in many of the same places as ragweeds. Both are members of the daisy family, but there’s a significant difference. Pollinated by wind, ragweeds’ dull green flowers release lightweight pollen that travels for miles in all directions. A single plant can propel as many as 1 billion irritating pollen grains-bad news for the 50 to 60 million Americans who suffer from seasonal hay fever.

By contrast, goldenrods’ bright yellow blossoms produce pollen too heavy to be carried by wind, according to a recent National Wildlife Federation article. “They rely entirely on animal pollinators,” says University of Delaware entomologist Doug Tallamy. More than 100 species of goldenrod native to North America bloom from late summer into fall, providing nectar and pollen for wildlife long after many plants have stopped flowering.

Tallamy’s studies show that goldenrods provide food and shelter for 115 butterfly and moth species in the U.S. Mid-Atlantic alone. More than 11 native bee species feed specifically on the plants, and in fall, Monarch butterflies depend on them for nectar to fuel their long migrations. Even in winter, songbirds find nourishment from goldenrod seed heads long after the blossoms have faded.

Planting goldenrod in your garden, along with other fall-blooming native perennials, can turn your backyard into a wildlife mecca every autumn.

Goldenrod’s only drawback is aggressiveness – some species are rapid colonizers – but a number of varieties have now been tamed for the garden. One cultivar called “Fireworks” is a favorite of the Monarchs and produces a lot of seeds for songbirds. Read your plant labels and do your research to find the goldenrod that will “play nicely” in your landscape.

Benefits of native landscaping include: Reduces time, energy and money spent on yard maintenance; increase wildlife habitats; raises property values; promotes biodiversity; prevents or reduces erosion; reduces herbicide, pesticide, and fertilizer applications.

Take a walk around your yard and take your garden journal! Try to find a few places where you can tuck a native plant to provide some fall nectar for the Monarchs.

The **deadline** to register for the training classes to become an OSUE Master Gardener Volunteer is **September 7, 2020**. Training will be offered virtually by using Zoom. Training begins September 22 and ends on November 19. Classes will be held every Tuesday and Thursday, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The 2020 class costs \$150.00 plus the cost of a required background check. Applications can be found online at <https://go.osu.edu/registemgv>. We hope you will consider joining us and make some new gardening friends!