

Pause for Plants, September.

The Midas touch!

A golden glow of summer lingers until frost when members of the Aster family produce their many yellow colored blooms. Prominent among these are numerous species of Goldenrod, belonging to the genus *Solidago*. Our South Carolina Plant Atlas includes thirty-five species that may occur here. Among them is Tall Goldenrod, South Carolina's State Wildflower. It was so designated by the 115th session of the General Assembly, when the governor signed the bill on May 14th, 2003. Tall Goldenrod grows throughout South Carolina, and occurs in most of the continental United States and Canada.

Not the culprit!

Goldenrod gets an undeserved bad press, as it is often blamed unjustly for allergy symptoms actually caused by other late summer and fall flowers. One of these, an aster family "cousin" of goldenrod, is the inconspicuously green ragweed. Equally inconspicuous is Lamb's Quarters, a member of the goosefoot family. These, along with fall grasses, are the real culprits with their light windborne allergenic pollens. None of these have color, or fragrance to attract pollinators. More often than not, goldenrods bloom in and among these, so it's easy to blame their conspicuous yellow blooms for fall "hay fevers." Goldenrod deserves better press!



Goldenrod left, and its often times companion plant Ragweed, right.

It's a "bug eat bug" world!

In addition to their fragrance and color, goldenrods have sticky heavy pollen, easily picked up by pollinators attracted to the plants. All sorts of critters are attracted to goldenrods. Beetles, butterflies, and ants flock to the tiny fragrant flowers for a nectar meal. Usually you can also find well camouflaged spiders nestled among the flowers waiting an insect lunch!



"Golden" Crab Spider on Goldenrod's blossoms.

Flowers to "dye for"!

And Goldenrod produces a good natural dye. Flowers are harvested and mixed with alum to give a golden yellow dye, or mixed with iron for an olive green colored dye.

