

## It's Time to Embrace Goldenrods, For their Beauty and for our Declining Pollinators

Unfortunately, goldenrods are one of the most maligned groups of native plants. While species such as Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) and Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) spread aggressively via rhizomes, most goldenrods are well-behaved, attractive, and essential as late season sources of nectar for pollinators. Like other insect-pollinated plants, goldenrods produce sticky pollen that is not prone to becoming airborne, so it is not a source of hay fever as is often alleged. Ragweed is the most abundant source of windborne pollen at the time when goldenrods are in flower.

Like many plant groups, the taxonomy of goldenrods has recently changed with the advent of genetic analysis. Although we still place all of them in the genus *Solidago* in our catalog to avoid confusion, those with a flat topped inflorescences have been reclassified to different genera. Grass-leaved Goldenrod and its close relatives are now in the genus *Euthamia* while another group of species which includes Ohio, Riddell's and Stiff Goldenrod have been placed in the genus *Oligoneuron*.

While Grass-leaved Goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*) spreads prolifically by rhizomes in favorable conditions, the goldenrods in the genus *Oligoneuron* do not spread by rhizomes. Further, they are exceptionally attractive to pollinators. Typically their blossoms are covered with an assortment of insects including honey bees, native bees, butterflies, wasps, and beetles. Together with asters, goldenrods are an essential final source of nectar at the end of growing season. It is time to put aside the long held prejudices against this vital group of composites for the sake of our declining pollinators. Any seed mix developed for pollinator habitat should contain one or more of these beautiful goldenrod species.



Riddell's Goldenrod (*Solidago riddellii*)

### PLANT FEATURE: STIFF GOLDENROD (*SOLIDAGO RIGIDA*)



*Solidago rigida* (Stiff Goldenrod) - A characteristic species of mesic prairies, Stiff Goldenrod produces flattop cluster of golden flowers primarily during the month of September. An upright rosette of fuzzy grayish-green basal foliage dominates the early season growth. By late summer, it bolts a 3-5 foot flower stalk topped with a flat-topped inflorescence typically 3-4 inches across. The flowers coincide with the annual fall migration of the monarch, making it an important nectar source for this declining butterfly. Numerous other pollinators crowd the flowers, including both native and honey bees.

In a pollinator garden, stiff goldenrod should be planted with other robust species of the tall grass prairie, including Rattlesnake Master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), New England Aster (*Aster novae-angliae*), Sweet Black-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*), and Dense Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*). In a restoration, it should be planted with associates in our [Mesic Prairie Mix](#).