



garden spot

Goldenrod is nothing to sneeze at



MARTY FIGLEY

This is the time of year when we see fields and wild areas filled with the golden blooms of goldenrod (*Solidago*).

Enjoy it for what it is and please don't blame it for causing hay fever. It has been much

maligned and doesn't deserve such a reputation.

The pollen of goldenrod is sticky and heavy to aid in pollination by insects. It also clumps and clings but doesn't blow in the wind. Ragweed, which often grows in the same fields as goldenrod, is the culprit.

Europeans have been growing these pretty plants, especially hybrid varieties, in their gardens for years and now they are being used more and more in our gardens, especially when the garden has

a relaxed look. They are also a sought-after plant in the Dutch cut flower market.

There are several species of goldenrod native to prairies and roadsides from Canada, reaching as far south as Florida and west to Texas.

The golden flower heads (also think primrose yellow, canary yellow, mustard and cream) of some are sometimes sparse, while others carry broad sprays of bloom that last for several weeks.

Native species include *Solidago canadensis*, which is a spreader and prefers rich soil; *S. odora*, with anise-scented foliage; *S. speciosa*, a non-invasive plant that tolerates dry soil; and *S. rugosa*, with wrinkled foliage growing from spreading clumps.

Cultivars include "Cloth of Gold," "Crown of Rays" and "Golden Fleece." They are generally easy to grow in average soil. They do like a sunny garden.

If you choose a spreader, the size can be controlled by cutting around the

plant with a sharp spade after the blooms have faded. They can also be divided quite successfully in spring or fall.

July begins the show, which continues through October so that continuous bloom can be achieved in the garden. Heights range from 10 to 72 inches.

Drying

A walk in a field will introduce you to some varieties of goldenrod and will give you an opportunity to gather some for fall and winter bouquets. If you wish to make a fresh arrangement, carry a bucket of water along to keep them fresh. If you plan to dry the plants, it can be done two ways.

Gather a bundle (not too large) and secure it with a rubber band, which will tighten as the stems shrink, then hang it in a warm, dark place (I use the garage).

Please see FIGLEY, D10



Marty Figley

Going for gold: Bright and beautiful goldenrod isn't the cause of hay fever.

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