

WILD NEWS

PRINCE WILLIAM WILDFLOWER SOCIETY, A Chapter of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society

ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1984

REGISTRATION 1:00 P.M. — MEETING BEGINS AT 1:30 P.M.

Bethel Lutheran Church, Sudley Rd. & Plantation Ln., Manassas

Cole Burrell, Assistant Curator of the National Arboretum's Fern Valley, will be our Annual Meeting speaker. Cole's program will include a general presentation on the Arboretum's many gardens and plant collections with special emphasis on Fern Valley's native plants.

Cole has degrees in botany and horticulture. Before coming to the Washington area he lived in Richmond where he established an extensive wildflower garden. Cole is a charter member of the VWPS, has served as rescue committee chairman, and is presently recording secretary for the state board.

SILENT AUCTION

Auction items include:

- Shade/sun plant collection
- Sun plant collection
- Shade plant collection
- Hummingbird plant collection
- Wildflower photos and prints
- Woodburned wildflower plaques
- and more . . .

SEED EXCHANGE

REFRESHMENTS

DOOR PRIZES

BRIEF BUSINESS MEETING

Bring seeds for the seed exchange and a total of your volunteer hours and mileage for the past year. We'll soon begin a new fiscal and membership year and this is a good time to bring guests and prospective members. LET'S HAVE A GOOD TURNOUT!

PLANT SALE

The Potowmack Chapter's fall plant sale will be held this Sunday, 1:00 -- 5:00 p.m., at Green Spring Park near Annandale. Species for sale include cardinal flower (in bloom), blue lobelia, black-eyed Susan, purple coneflower and swamp milkweed along with many others. The chapter will also have permanent metal plant labels for sale.

WE GOOFED

The insert included with this newsletter actually belongs to last month's newsletter. We're sorry for the inconvenience and hope you will insert this sheet into the July-August issue.



If this plant caused hay fever, it wouldn't even be here. Confusing? See Marion's article, pg. 2.

WILDFLOWER-
OF-THE-MONTH



GOLDENROD

Solidago spp.

MARION BLOIS

Ass't. Professor of Biology, NVCC

Goldenrods are one of our most maligned, misunderstood and unappreciated group of native plants. In Europe and England where there is only a single common species, horticulturist have developed many varieties for enthusiastic gardeners.

In the United States there are approximately 85 species of the goldenrod genus *Solidago*. Roger Torrey Peterson's field guide reports 62-69 species in the northeastern U.S. In Virginia there are 35 species reported in the Atlas of the Flora of Virginia. Sixteen of the species are reported in Northern Virginia (13 documented in Prince William Co.).

The goldenrods, with the exception of "silver rod" (*S. bicolor*) which has white flowers, have flowers of a golden yellow color. Goldenrods, as members of the composite family (Asteraceae), have relatively small flower heads of both ray flowers (which have pistil only) and disk flowers (with both stamen and pistil). The leaves are always alternate with parallel or netted veins depending on the species. Both the shape of the inflorescence as well as leaf shape and venation pattern are used to identify species. Peterson's guide contains tips on identification of all species in our area. Even expert botanists sometimes have difficulty

in identifying individual species since species often hybridize. All species are perennial.

Goldenrods have an undeserved notoriety for causing allergies. Hal Bruce's explanation (in How to Grow Wildflowers and Wild Trees and Shrubs in Your Garden) of why goldenrods don't cause allergies is so good that it deserves quoting: "Goldenrods have brightly colored flowers because they have evolved to attract color-sensitive pollinators. Their pollen grains are relatively large, heavier than air, because they are designed to be carried off by flies, bees, butterflies, even ants or birds, but not by the wind. Wind-pollinated plants usually have unshowy flowers (the wind has no eyes) and very light pollen in extreme abundance (bees take pollen from flower to flower; the wind scatters it over the whole countryside to ensure seed set). It is the polinees of the wind — sedges, ragweeds, wormwoods, oaks, pines, and many other large trees, and, most guilty of all, the grasses — which cause hay fever. If wind removed the pollen of goldenrods before their yellow-loving pollinators got to it, the bright color of the flowers would be useless, and, since nothing useless exists long in nature, it would quickly disappear."

The genus name, *Solidago*, means "to make whole" reflecting the centuries-old belief in the healing power of various species. The leaves of some species have been dried and used as teas or infusions to treat urinary tract problems such as kidney stones, as a diuretic and an astringent, and to stop hemorrhaging. Sweet goldenrod (*S. odora*) a species not found in our area, is used as a popular tea with a slight anise flavor. It is even claimed that this tea can be used to treat hay fever, sore throats, coughs and colds. Other used include the dried inflorescences in fall flower arrangements, a dye source (especially gray goldenrod, *S. nemoralis*), and handsome additions to wild and cultivated gardens.

As you enjoy the last displays of late-summer and early-autumn color, try to appreciate the variety and beauty of goldenrods. Let's clear the name of this lovely genus that can add so much color to the late season flowering landscape or to your own wildflower garden.

CULTIVATION & PROPAGATION

Nancy Arrington

If you've considered goldenrods just common roadside and field flowers or suitable only for a wildflower meadow, take another look! Many species make attractive perennial additions to the wildflower garden or cultivated border, becoming even more beautiful in the garden than in the wild.

Continued next page

Goldenrods are normally thought of as sun lovers, but most will bloom with half a day of sun and some of the more delicate species are woodland natives. Their golden color and various shapes combine well with the late summer and early autumn blues and purples of asters, lobelias, blazing stars, ironweed, and mistflower.

Plants can be started from seed though some variations can be expected because of natural hybridizing. Seeds of most *Solidagos* need a cold period in order to germinate and can be sowed outdoors in the fall or stored in the refrigerator for spring sowing. Mature plants can be divided after blooming or in very early spring. Seeds and plants are available from wildflower nurseries.

To prevent unwanted seedlings, cut off flowering heads before they go to seed. Plants that spread from the roots can be contained by planting in a bottomless gallon container which has been sunk into the ground.

The following species, found naturally in our area, are recommended by wildflower garden writers.

***S. bicolor*, Silver-rod** — the only white species; delicate cylindrical plant under 2' tall; takes considerable shade.S

***S. caesia*, Blue-stemmed or Wreath Goldenrod** — well-spaced flower tufts in the axils of the smooth slender leaves; bluish or purplish wiry stem which often arches into a graceful wreath-like shape; 1-3' tall; a species of woodlands and damp barrens.

***S. erecta*, Erect or Slender Goldenrod** — slender, wand-like inflorescence similar to *liatris*; 1-4' tall; dry soils, woodlands.

***S. graminifolia*, Grass-leaved Goldenrod** — willowlike leaves with flat open inflorescence; 2-4' tall; good for naturalizing in moist, open meadows with Joe-pye, swamp milkweed and ironweed; spreads by roots but can be contained by planting in a bottomless can.

***S. nemoralis*, Old Field Goldenrod** — so named because it is often found in abandoned fields; one of the commonest but also one of the most delicate and pretty; around 2' tall with attractive blue-grey foliage and lemon or primrose yellow flowers.

***S. rugosa*, Rough-leaved Goldenrod** — "our most exciting goldenrod" says the North Carolina Botanical Garden; 1-7' tall; arching sprays of bright yellow flowers, tolerant of poor dry soils.

The following species, occurring in Virginia, but not in our area, are also highly recommended for cultivation.

BUTTERFLY FLOWERS

Claudia Thompson-De'ahl and Anne Ziminiski presented a very pretty and informative program on butterfly gardening at our last chapter meeting. From Claudia and Anne we learned that a butterfly's favorite color is purple and his least favorite is white. Butterfly gardening gets a bit complicated when one must consider food for the larvae as well as the adult, nesting places, and other considerations, but some good plants are purple loosestrife, blue lobelia, Queen Anne's lace and other members of the carrot family, Joe-pye weed, and the milkweeds.

NEW VWPS BOARD MEMBERS

At the VWPS Annual Meeting, Claudia Thompson-De'ahl was elected second vice-president and Jean Chitren was elected to the nominating committee.

PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

Prince William Chapter members fared well again this year in the VWPS Photo Contest. Elaine Haug won second place in the print category, and Elaine and Nicky Staunton received honorable mention in the slide category.

***S. puberula*, Downy Goldenrod** — similar to *S. bicolor* but with very large deep golden individual flowers; stem is often purplish; 1-3' tall; dry sandy or sterile soils, barrens; Atlas of the Virginia Flora shows it occurring in mountain and costal counties.

***S. rigida*, Prairie Goldenrod** — flat topped flower heads of rich golden yellow atop sturdy stems; 3-4' tall; showy plant for large sunny border; good for late color as flowers remain pretty even after frost has damaged the leaves; scattered locations in mts. counties.

***S. sempervirens*, Seaside Goldenrod** — "should be in every sunny wild garden"—Taylor & Hamblin, Wildflower Cultivation; deep yellow flattened flower head 2-6' tall; good choice for rear of perennial border or for naturalizing on dry sunny banks; pinch flower stalks in July and August for bushier plants; a costal species.

***S. stricta*, Wandlike Goldenrod** — narrow leaved with a tall cylindrical spike of very showy flowers; 2-7' tall. sandy woods, pine barrens; a costal species.

***S. squarrosa*, Stout Goldenrod** — according to Taylor and Hamblin, ". . . a beautiful goldenrod, it truly is a rod of gold . . . most showy of the woodland species"; 1½-5' tall; individual flowers are large; dry or rocky woodland openings, edges, thickets; a mountain species in Virginia.

ROADSIDE PROJECT

Our chapter is participating in a roadside beautification project along with the County Extension office and the County Soil Conservation office. Ed Milhouse, County Extension agent and wildflower society member, is coordinating efforts of the three groups to help Chuck Tobin with his Eagle Scout project.

Chuck plans to establish a wildflower planting at the intersection of Rts. 234 & 15 to demonstrate the beauty and practicality of native plants. He plans to use plants which stay under 18" so the area will not need constant mowing.

The Soil Conservation office has donated money to purchase seed mixes which will be supplemented

with seeds the Scouts are collecting locally. The Highway Department has given Ed permission to establish a similar planting at an intersection in Dale City.

Ed has asked society members to help collect seed. He's especially interested in species under 18" tall that will tolerate dry soil and full sun. Bring seed to the annual meeting or get it to Ed as soon as you can. He plans to get the seeding done within a month.

Other society members involved in the project are Claudia Thompson-De'ahl, Marion Blois, and Diana Weand, Executive Secretary of the Soil Conservation office. Other members have volunteered to help with the seeding, and if you can spare some time, get in touch with one of the people mentioned above.

ANNUAL MEETING

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6 1:00 P.M. BETHEL CHURCH, MANASSAS

EXCITING SPEAKER SILENT AUCTION SEED EXCHANGE DOOR PRIZES REFRESHMENTS

Details inside Newsletter

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GOLDENROD

Solidago bicolor