

**Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Beverly Wickersham
“Goldenrod: A Herald of Fall”**

The Goldenrod (*Solidago sp.*), a member of the Asteraceae family, is a native of Europe that spread to Asia and both North and South America. At least 20 of the 80+ species, occur in Texas, and they are currently putting on quite a show in the fields and pastures in our area and throughout much of the state. Additional common names are Yellow Weed, Farewell Summer, Woundwort, and Aaron' Rod, a reference to the Goldenrod being used as a divining rod to locate underground water or minerals.* Most species propagate by a spreading root system in addition to seed, and for this reason they can be troublesome in a garden bed. However, the several plants that found a home in my yard are not a problem. I always look forward to the fall blooms and know they are signaling that cooler weather is on the way.

Although Goldenrod frequently is blamed for our fall hay fever problems, the heavy, sticky pollen is not wind-borne. Instead a great variety of insects transport the pollen from plant to plant. The wind-pollinated Ragweed (*Ambrosia sp.*) flowers at the same time the Goldenrods are in bloom and produce an abundance of air-borne pollen. It is Ragweed that is considered the leading cause of hay fever in the United States.

The Latin name *Solidago* means “to make whole.” In ancient medical practices, Goldenrod was used extensively as a healing herb. It was especially useful in staunching the blood from wounds. Native Americans found the Goldenrod useful in treating a variety of ailments, including ulcers, kidney diseases, colds, rheumatism, and slow-healing wounds. Herbalists use Goldenrod to treat arthritis, allergies, colds, and flu, inflammation of the bladder or urinary tract, kidney stones, laryngitis, and sore throats.

Other uses of the plant include extracting the oil from the goldenrod leaves to be used in perfumes. Additionally, parts of the plant are used to extract dyes for wool. The dye colors achieved vary from gold to orange to olive and even gray. Following the Boston Tea Party, the American Colonists used the leaves of the native goldenrod to make a substitute tea. They called it “Liberty Tea.” * Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

*[Legends and Lore of Texas Wildflowers](#) by Elizabeth Silverthorne

In the picture: Goldenrod, (*Solidago sp.*),

