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## UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week

### Goldenrod



**Question.** I have terrible allergies in late summer. Are they caused by goldenrod?

**Answer.** In late August we are surrounded by color – field after field of bright goldenrod yellow. Sadly, most of us are not overjoyed by the splendor of nature’s golden paintbrush. Instead we unjustly accuse goldenrod of causing hay fever. While stuffy noses and watery eyes are undeniably a problem at this time of year, only a teensy-tiny fraction of the pollen causing these symptoms comes from goldenrod.

About three-quarters of people who are allergic to spring pollen-producing plants are also allergic to ragweed. Ragweed and goldenrod bloom at the same time, typically starting in late summer. Ragweed flowers are so small and drab that most people never even notice them. Unfortunately, ragweed pollen is carried by wind, can travel for hundreds of miles, and often lingers well into fall. Goldenrod pollen is too heavy and sticky to be blown about by the wind. Instead it is carried about by countless insects who visit goldenrod plants to feast on the almost limitless pollen and nectar, or, in some cases, on each other.

If you take a close look at goldenrod flowers you will see all sorts of beetles feeding on the yellow pollen grains. Bees, butterflies and moths visit goldenrod to dine on the nectar. Beekeepers find their beehives filling up with dark-colored goldenrod honey this time of year. And southbound orange and black monarch butterflies pause frequently along their migration routes to sip the high energy goldenrod nectar. Instead of cursing goldenrod, maybe it’s time to consider planting some on your property.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center’s Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at [answers@unh.edu](mailto:answers@unh.edu)