

Goldenrods in the Garden

Late summer in Virginia wouldn't be complete without the yellow blooms of goldenrods. Despite their beauty and immense value to pollinators, these plants are often overlooked in a garden setting. With over 40 species of goldenrod native to Virginia, there is a *Solidago* for almost every habitat and garden space. Here are a few of our favorites that you can find on the native plant trail.



Tall Goldenrod

Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) - The most common goldenrod in Virginia and one of the most widespread in the country, this plant gets up to 7 feet tall and spreads by rhizome. Its long, nodding sprays of flowers bloom in September.

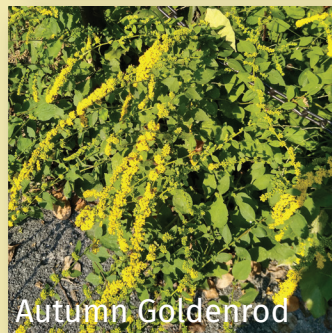


Stiff Goldenrod

Early Goldenrod (*S. juncea*) - This goldenrod blooms earlier than the others, typically flowering in late June or July. It looks somewhat like tall goldenrod, but is more compact, typically reaching around 4 feet in height.

Stiff Goldenrod (*S. rigida*) - This goldenrod is showier than most, with larger individual flowers and a more upright growth habit. Its leaves are broad and sandpapery, and its average size is 4-6 feet. Prefers full sun.

Wreath goldenrod (*S. caesia*) - A short, shade-loving goldenrod, this plant reaches about 2 feet tall and has flowers that grow all along the stem rather than just at the end. Unlike most goldenrods, it is somewhat susceptible to deer browse.



Autumn Goldenrod

Autumn Goldenrod (*S. sphacelata*) - This goldenrod prefers part shade and can tolerate drought well. Typically growing about 3 feet tall, it has rounded leaves and long, narrow sprays of flowers. This plant thrives especially well on basic soils or over limestone.

Zigzag Goldenrod (*S. flexicaulis*) - Another shorter, shade loving goldenrod, this plant has broad leaves and a subtly zig-zagging flowering stem that reaches about 2 feet tall. Its individual flowers are large and showy, and they grow in upright clumps at the end of the stems.

Despite popular belief, goldenrod pollen does not cause seasonal allergies. They are insect pollinated and the pollen grains are too large and sticky to be carried on the wind. The less-showy ragweed is the cause of most late-season allergies.



YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

The Native Plant Trail is supported by the Foundation of the State Arboretum. Become a member of FOSA and help preserve Virginia's Native Plants. Other benefits include discounts at other gardens across the country. Visit our website blandy.virginia.edu and click on the "Support" tab for more information.

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A Guide to the Native Plant Trail

The State Arboretum of Virginia
at the University of Virginia's
Blandy Experimental Farm

Exploring the Nancy Larrick Crosby Native Plant Trail



The Native Plant Trail is a celebration of Virginia's native plants. Follow the trail through three unique habitats - a woodland, meadow, and a wetland. Each habitat features plants that showcase the beauty and diversity of our state's flora.

The gardens and landscapes in this area are intentionally naturalistic and 'wild' feeling. While this area is managed and new native plants are added periodically, we also try to leave space for natural processes to function. Important habitat features like dead stems, fallen leaves and decomposing logs are left year-round to support wildlife. This guide provides information about many native plants along the trail.

Late Summer radiance



The late days of summer bring on a flush of wildflowers in Virginia - one last raucous display of pink, purple, and gold before autumn arrives to herald the end of the growing season.

Most of these remarkable blooms are found in our open meadows and wetlands, where the plants have been able to soak up sunlight throughout the long summer days, often growing to tremendous heights.

Hummingbirds, butterflies, wasps, and migrating birds are just some of the wildlife you'll see visiting our plants during this busy season.



Boneset (white), Cardinalflower (red), and Goldenrod

White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricata*) - One of the hardiest woodland plants, this small shade-loving flower can thrive in dry shade and has very few pest problems making it a favorite for gardeners.

Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) - This plant's orange blooms are hummingbird favorites. Its sap is also used to help relieve the itching caused by poison ivy.

Thinleaf Sunflower (*Helianthus decapetalus*) - Unlike most sunflowers, this plant prefers part shade. It's seeds are an important food source for songbirds.

Seasonal Wetlands

Though you'll see a diversity of blooms along the trail's wetlands this time of year, you might not actually see any standing water. This is because most of Blandy's wetlands are 'ephemeral', or seasonal wetlands. They fill with water during the cool, wet winter and spring months, and dry up when it gets warm and rainfall becomes scarce.

As a result, the vegetation can be highly variable - in wet years, standing water will favor growth of cattails and aquatic plants, while in dry years plants like smartweeds and boneset will take over.

Our native wetland shrubs, primarily silky dogwood, elderberry, and buttonbush, are adapted to both conditions, and can survive both flooding and brief drought.

Pale Indian Plantain (*Arnoglossum atriplicifolium*) - The flowers of this massive plant are favorites of harmless, beneficial wasps. Various species like blue winged wasps and sand wasps are attracted to its unique blooms and plentiful nectar.

White Snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) - Common along woodland edges, this plant seeds itself prolifically. While its flowers feed many species of butterflies, its leaves are toxic to all mammals, making it deer and rabbit resistant.

Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) - This plant was used by both Native Americans and early European settlers to reduce fever. Its common name comes from its use in treating 'breakbone fever,' which describes the high fever caused by the flu.

Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium spp.*) - These tall plants were named for a Mohican leader called Shaugethqueat who took the English name "Joseph Pye". He taught English settlers in Massachusetts how to use them to reduce fevers.

New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) - Thriving in wetlands and wet meadows, this plant is a key resource for many species of butterflies. It is a host plant for painted lady butterflies, and tiger swallowtails regularly feed on its nectar.



Blue winged wasp pollinating boneset

Halberdleaf Rose-Mallow (*Hibiscus laevis*) - The flowers of this plant are pink-white near the edges, but fade to a dark red at the center. This color change helps guide insects to the pollen, which results in better seed set for the plants.

Calico Aster (*Symphyotrichum lateriflorum*) - One of many asters blooming at this time, the flowers have white petals and a center disk that can range from yellow to pink to red, depending on maturity. Many butterflies like the silvery checkerspot use native asters as host plants

Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*) - Another garden favorite, this plant's dense blue/purple flowers bloom for a long time and attract a wide array of pollinators.

What's in a sign?

Use the signs along the trail to locate plants, and refer to this guide for more information about many of them.

Common name and scientific name

Heart-Leaf Skullcap
Scutellaria ovata

This annual wildflower grows in moist to dry forests, especially over limestone.



Description of plant form, habitat and growing conditions.

Map of wild distribution in Virginia. Counties with dots indicate where this plant has been recorded growing in the wild.