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How to Grow Goldenrod



Photo Credit: Ksenia Lada

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Planting, Growing, and Caring

By Andy Wilcox**Last Updated:** March 27, 2025

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Native plants that provide color and habitat are in focus now, and goldenrod fits that bill perfectly. Whether in a modern meadow, as a patch in a perennial bed, or even in a container on the patio, goldenrod brings fall color and graceful feathery plumes to the landscape. And it's great for our buzzing friends! Learn how to plant, grow, and care for goldenrod.

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About Goldenrod

For many, this plant seems to need little introduction. We've blown past it growing in ditches on the highway, seen it popping up behind the shed, or vaguely appreciated its nodding, yellow heads on tall stems as part of the pleasing earth tones

Goldenrod is a large group of plants in the genus *Solidago*, although you'll also see plants from *Euthamia* and *Oligoneuron* called goldenrods. Unless you're a botanist, you likely won't be able to tell the difference. Most goldenrods are tall and enjoy drier sites, but with over one hundred species, there are goldenrods to fit almost any soil type and location. They're herbaceous perennials that tolerate poor sites and even clay soils as long as there's some drainage.

Goldenrods sometimes get a reputation as spreaders, and some species sprawl out quite easily, reproducing from rhizomes. There are goldenrods with more fibrous root systems, sometimes called clumping goldenrods, which are better at staying put where you plant them, although they can spread by seed.

Goldenrod for Pollinators

Goldenrod blooms in late summer and carries flower heads well into fall. It's na-

gin to fade out and pollen becomes more scarce. You'd be hard-pressed to find a better all-purpose pollinator plant for your garden.

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While a field full of goldenrods pleases the bees, our eyes may wish for a bit more variety. Fortunately, several other natives, such as asters, mountain mint, milkweeds, bee balm, and Joe-pye weed, are easy to combine with goldenrod plantings. Add native grasses like big bluestem and switchgrass for a native pollinator patch that will wave in the wind and be alive with activity. [Check out the best flowers](#)



Coneflowers, goldenrod and blazing star combine to create a bouquet of native wildflowers that pollinators love.

Photo: Mark Baldwin

Does Goldenrod Cause Allergies?

Goldenrod is not the yellow autumn native plant responsible for your allergies flaring up. Goldenrod pollen is heavier and sticky and doesn't become airborne.

The correct plant to assign your irritation to is ragweed, which disperses zillions of pollen grains to float across the wind and into your sinuses.

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PLANTING

Goldenrods will put on their best showy colors if planted in full sun, but they'll make do with only partial sunshine. Mostly, they prefer dry to medium moisture and acidic pH, but a few species readily grow in wetter meadow-like conditions. Shop around for the right cultivar and species for your location, as these perennials can be around for a while.

Goldenrod looks best in larger plantings. Use patches to bring out the color and allow it to take hold in a spot. It also looks perfect as a border plant along a fence mixed with other natives.

When to Plant Goldenrod

Goldenrod nursery starts can be planted in spring or early autumn. If planting in the fall, strive to get them in the ground at least six weeks before the ground freezes or about four weeks before your first frost.

Goldenrod seeds need stratification, or cold, moist treatment, to break dormancy.

Most species germinate best with 60 days of cold exposure. If planting indoors, start cold-treating your goldenrod seeds in the refrigerator two months before planting.

Start goldenrod from seed indoors about 6-8 weeks before your last frost in spring, and start hardening them off after the frosts leave.

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If planting outdoors, fall sowing is a great way to let nature take care of the stratification process. Plant the seeds any time before the ground freezes, and let winter



Solidago speciosa.

Photo: Brian Woolson

How to Plant Goldenrod

Young goldenrod plants can be found in spring in the native plant section of larger garden centers or ordered online. They are also cooperative to start from seed for better selection and lower expense. The seeds are small, and one packet will contain several hundred. Half an ounce to an ounce can often be purchased for around \$25 and will thickly seed a thousand-square-foot native pollinator patch.

To Plant Goldenrod Plants

- Dig a hole about as deep and a little wider than the current root ball. While a hand trowel is sufficient for this size

- Trim off any girdling or circling roots, and score the root ball if the goldenrod is pot-bound to encourage new root growth.
- Place the plant in the hole, adjusting the depth by filling or digging as needed.
- Fill the hole with the soil you removed and tamp it in with your hands to remove any air pockets.
- Water well and apply mulch to keep weeds down the first season.

Starting Goldenrod From Seed

Goldenrod seeds are small and need light to germinate. Remember to stratify them, as mentioned above. Goldenrod seeds usually germinate in 2-3 weeks at room temperature.

To start goldenrod indoors in flats:

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- Use any well-drained seed starting mix, or make your own.
- Premoisten the medium, and sprinkle the seeds on top.
- Press the seeds lightly into contact with the soil using your hand or a flat scrap of wood.
- Cover the tray with a humidity dome or plastic wrap to maintain humidity, and place under light.

When planting goldenrod seeds in outdoor beds:

- Prepare the soil and rake it smooth.
- Broadcast seed at a rate of about 50 seeds (they're tiny!) per square foot.
- Lightly dust them with soil or a very thin straw mulch to help them remain in place and reduce bird feeding.

Gently watering them immediately will help them make soil contact.

Like many natives, goldenrod won't need much attention from you. That's one of the great reasons to plant them!

- If you haven't received much rain, provide young goldenrod plants with weekly water after transplanting. Once established, they are quite drought tolerant.
- Deadheading isn't required.
- Goldenrods grown in the ground won't need fertilizing, but those in containers will benefit from a monthly general-purpose fertilizer. Follow the directions on the label.

Types

- Showy goldenrod (*S. speciosa*) earns its name with larger flower heads atop strong dark stems. A later bloomer with a fibrous root system, this species is less likely to spread. It's winter hardy in USDA zones 3-8 and reaches a mature height of about 3-4 feet.
- Late goldenrod (*S. gigantea*) is a tall

This is an aggressive spreader, sending out rhizomes to conquer the landscape.

- Sweet goldenrod (*S. odora*) is a modest plant about three feet tall. It's clump forming and won't spread, and is perfect for smaller spots where it can be a showy splash of fall color.



Solidago gigantea.

Photo: Pictures_for_You

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Goldenrods don't suffer many issues but may be slightly affected by powdery mildew.

WIT AND WISDOM

- The genus *Solidago* comes from the Latin word *solidus*, which means to make whole, referring to the plant's use as a medicinal plant.
- According to Robin Sweetser, "Some Native American tribes used the fresh or dried flowers in tea to cure different ailments. Today, it's often used as a medicinal herb to relieve colds, fevers, and the flu."
- After tossing all the tea in the harbor, Bostonians experimented with making tea out of goldenrod and other native berries and plants.
- Goldenrods are deer-resistant, especially once they start to get tall and woody-stemmed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture.

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COMMENTS

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Nancy Garrison (not verified) 6 months 3

weeks ago

Goldenrod is one of my favorite fall wildflowers!!! It goes so good with Ironweed!! I try and get it to grow along my backyard fence and this year I succeeded!!! This article will be a very helpful read so I can have more goldenrod to enjoy.

So many people give goldenrod a bad name; they call it a weed; what a very nice colorful

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REPLY

davey (not verified) 7 months ago

One of the best gardens I ever had contained a couple giant goldenrods. The pollinators would swarm it. This last 10 years I have been trying to get it started and with the article above, finally found why it was resistant to start.

Another plant is the Milkweed which I do believe the monarchs love. Wonder if starting those seeds are similar to the goldenrods?

REPLY

Anne (not verified) 7 months ago

I like the idea Goldenrod is native to North America~

REPLY

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