

# Nature Notes

...from Sharon

## Goldenrod

*Solidago odora*

Another Fall bloomer! Take a walk along the estuary trail from parking area #3 to see the Goldenrod blooming along both sides of the trail, mostly in the sunny areas. These belong to the Aster family and are perennial herbs. The flowering herbs can reach 2-6 feet high. Right now, most of the Goldenrod in the Preserve stands about two feet tall. One variety of this plant is called Chapman's Goldenrod - *Solidago odora* Aiton var. *chapmanii* and only gets up to three feet tall. This is one type that is in our Preserve. As many as six different species are found in central to south Florida. State-wide, there are 21 species of *Solidago* and about 70 different Goldenrods are found in the Eastern US. Some are endangered; many are found growing only in certain kinds of habitats, while others have a wide range. According to the University of Florida, the pollen does not cause hay fever.



The elliptic leaves are alternate and margins entire. Some variations have hairy leaves. However, a close look at ours does not indicate much hair without a microscope.

Insects will pollinate these flowers, and the petals fade and leave seed capsules on hairy wings. On an early morning walk you will see them floating in the air. Tiny seeds fall or are blown to another area, where they can create a new colony of fall wildflowers. The green stalk of the mother plant will die back and will rest until spring when they re-sprout and the cycle begins again. As long as there is no frost or other inhibitor, the rhizomes of the mother plant lay dormant until they re-sprout.



Have you ever heard the expression *going to seed*? It usually denotes someone or thing going down hill. Well, this isn't down hill, but this is just what the flower spikes of the Goldenrod do. Other plants that have flower spikes bloom from the base and new blooms extend to the tip. However, the Goldenrod actually goes to seed at the tips and new blooms form down the spike. The seeds are eaten by song birds and small mammals and the plants are eaten by rabbits and deer. (No known deer here.) Flowers attract butterflies for the nectar. At the left, you can see a flower spike just starting to turn brown and seed at the tips, yet vibrant at the base. To the right, you can see where most of the spike has *gone to seed*, except for the very base!



Goldenrod is often grown in wildflower gardens, meadows, and naturalistic borders. The leaves make a flavorful herbal tea. Leaves and tops (picked during flowering) have been used to make herbal medicines for a variety of disorders, including digestive and urinary problems, wounds, and ulcers. The flowers yield a deep yellow dye.