



# BWSR Featured Plant

**Plant Name: Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*)**

**Also known as: *Oligoneuron rigidum***

**Plant Family: Aster**



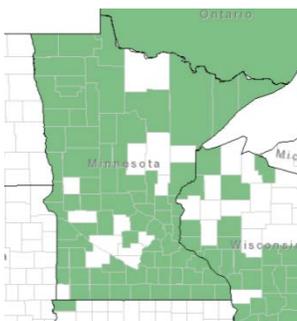
With pollen rich flowers goldenrods play a key ecological role in providing a late season food source for native bees to prepare them for a long winter — and in the case of monarch butterflies to prepare them for a long migration. Stiff goldenrod is heavily used by monarch butterflies and is often covered with a variety of bees, native flies and beetles. Many of these insects, such as soldier beetles and hoverflies play an additional role by preying on a variety of harmful insects, protecting gardens and nearby native plants. With upright stems, downy leaves, and bright yellow flowers stiff goldenrod is used in a wide range of plantings from ornamental gardens and stormwater projects to prairie restorations. Once the flowers are done blooming their downy seeds remain on the flower head into November or December, providing winter interest, as well as a food source for many songbirds including chickadees and finches.

## Identification

The rigid stems of stiff goldenrod extend upright to around four or five feet tall. The stems are covered with downy hairs and support terminal, flat-topped groupings of flowers. The bright yellow composite flowers bloom in late summer into the fall and produce fluffy seeds that are wind dispersed. The plant's basal leaves can be large, up to ten-inches long, downy and usually lack any serrations. The leaves that extend up the stem are alternate and tend to be smaller towards the top of the stem. Leaves on the upper portion of the plant are oval shaped and lack teeth.



*Leaves are consecutively smaller as they extend up the stem*



*Range based on University of Minnesota Herbarium data.*

## Range

The species is mainly found in the eastern half of the United States and extends into eastern Canada. Stiff goldenrod can handle a variety of soil conditions from gravels and sand to loam and clay. As a result, it is found in a wide range of habitats including dry and mesic prairie and savanna, roadsides, pastures, old fields, railways, and south facing bluff slopes. It has a Facultative Upland (FACU) wetland indicator status in the Midwest, Great Plains and northern regions. In Minnesota the species is widely distributed across the state, even showing up in forest openings and roadsides in heavily forested areas. There are three subspecies in Minnesota varying in height and form.

## Uses

### Primary Uses:

- Pollinator Habitat
- Songbird Habitat
- Erosion control

In providing a rich source of nectar late in the growing season, stiff goldenrod is used by a wide range of insects including long-tongued bees, short-tongued bees, honeybees, native flies, beetles, moths, wasps, and butterflies. Songbirds also use the plant as a perch and eat the seeds in early winter. A variety of insect species

eat the leaves including beetles, grasshoppers and lace bugs. The species is commonly used in urban native plantings for its aesthetic properties and for stabilization (deep fibrous roots), but it can be susceptible to deer and rabbit browsing in these areas. Goldenrod species have been used for a variety of medicinal purposes, including use as an antiseptic, astringent, to stop bleeding, and treat bee stings. Yellow, orange and brown dyes are also made from various parts of goldenrod plants.

## Planting Recommendations

### Planting Methods:

- Broadcast seeding
- Transplanting
- Containerized plants

Like many other prairie forbs, the seeds of stiff goldenrod are small and should be planted near the surface to ensure successful germination. Seed is usually broadcast seeded and then lightly raked or harrowed and rolled to ensure good seed to soil contact. As the seeds are susceptible to being eaten by birds it can be helpful to sow the seed shortly before snowfall; this also provides for stratification which can improve germination success. Plants are also available from nurseries in a variety of container sizes. Clumps of the species can also be successfully separated and transplanted in late fall or early spring. Weeds should be controlled around seedling plants, and periodic prescribed burning after the third year will help improve the growth and seed production.



## References

Illinois Wildflowers: [http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/stf\\_goldenrod.htm](http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/stf_goldenrod.htm)

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: [http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=OLRIR](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=OLRIR)

Minnesota Wildflowers <http://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/stiff-goldenrod>

## Similar Species



*Solidago canadensis* (Canada Goldenrod), has an open flower head and a rough stem and upper leaf surface.



*Solidago gigantea* (Giant Goldenrod) is similar to Canada goldenrod but has a waxy vs. a rough stem.



*Euthamia grosserratus* (Grass-leaved goldenrod) has a flat topped flower head but narrow, lance shaped leaves.



*Solidago ridelii* (Ridell's Goldenrod) has a relatively flat topped flower head but long, smooth and arching lance shaped leaves (Photo by Peter Dziuk, Minnesota Wildflowers)