

## Goldenrod and Ragweed: Are They Behind My Allergy?

Q: My allergies are going crazy this fall with all the pollen flying around. I've always heard that it's the goldenrod and ragweed that brings on this annual agony. Are these plants the cause of my misery?

A: Although gardeners are not allergists and aren't qualified to give you the remedy for your sniffles, we can talk about goldenrod and ragweed pollen.

There is a major difference in the size of the pollen of these two plants. Goldenrod has larger and heavier pollen that is spread by insect pollinators such as bees, butterflies, moths, and even beetles.

Ragweed pollen is much smaller and spreads in the air with billions of pollen particles to reproduce. Since these plants flower at the same time in the fall and often grow next to each other, goldenrod typically gets the blame for human allergy reactions.

Goldenrod is actually a beneficial plant and a great addition to your butterfly or pollinator garden. It is the state wildflower of South Carolina. Goldenrod decorates our roadsides and fields with beautiful yellow flowers every fall. Native Americans called them "Sun Medicine" for their bright color and medicinal uses.

Ragweed, on the other hand, is a notorious allergen source. If you want to get rid of ragweed around your garden, be prepared. You will want to wear a dust mask and gloves when handling these plants. Ragweed is known to cause skin rashes and we are all familiar with the other effects of ragweed pollen. It is best to pull up the plant before it has a chance to flower.

More information can be found at: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/goldenrod-ragweed/>.

Happy (and safe) gardening!