

Gardener's Notebook

Horticultural News and Research

GRADING GOLDENRODS

THOUGH AMERICAN allergy sufferers long blamed goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.) for their late summer sniffles, it has been convincingly documented that ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) is the principal culprit. But despite their popularity in Europe for their late summer and fall flower display, goldenrods have still been slow to catch on among gardeners in North America.



Solidago 'Goldkind' is a compact cultivar.

A recently published evaluation of the genus by the Chicago Botanic Garden's Plant Evaluation Program may go part of the way toward remedying that situation and will certainly make it easier for gardeners, especially in the Midwest, to select the best goldenrods for their gardens.

From the 25 species and cultivars that were evaluated in a five-year study at the garden, *S. rugosa* 'Fireworks' emerged with the best overall rating, drawing praise for its arching panicles of golden yellow flowers, dark green foliage, tolerance to fungal diseases that plague some goldenrods, and tight, shrublike habit. Other top performers were compact cultivars—topping out at 24 to 30 inches high—*S. sphacelata* 'Golden Fleece', *S.* 'Baby Sun', and *S.* 'Goldkind' (Golden Baby). Stiff golden-

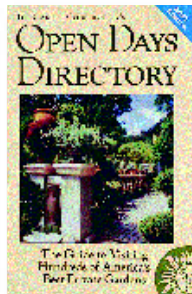
rod (*S. rigida*), a native of eastern and central North America, and *S. flexicaulis* 'Variegata', a shade-loving goldenrod with variegated foliage, also received good reviews in the study.

For more information on the Plant Evaluation Program, or to order a copy of the report on goldenrods (Issue 15) for \$3, write to Plant Evaluation Notes, c/o Richard Hawke, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022. You can also visit CBG's Web site at www.chicagobotanic.org.

Here are some sources for these goldenrods: **Forestfarm**, Williams, OR (541) 846-7269. www.forestfarm.com. Catalog \$5. (*S. rigida*). **Heronswood Nursery**, Kingston, WA (360) 297-4172. www.heronswood.com. Catalog \$5. (*S. flexicaulis* 'Variegata'). **Niche Gardens**, Chapel Hill, NC (919) 967-0078. www.nichegardens.com. Catalog \$3. (*S. rugosa* 'Fireworks' and *S. sphacelata* 'Golden Fleece').

VISIT AMERICA'S BEST GARDENS

SUMMER WILL BE here before you know it, so start planning your vacation now with the 2001 edition of The Garden Conservancy's *Open Days Directory*. This annual guide lists hundreds of private gardens throughout the United States that open their gates to visitors on specified days each summer under the auspices of the Garden Conservancy, a non profit organization dedicated to celebrating and preserving America's exceptional private gardens. There is a \$5 admission fee per garden.



Garden listings in the directory are arranged by state and each listing includes detailed directions for getting to individual gardens. In addition to the private gardens participating in the Open Days pro-

gram, nearby public gardens that may be of interest are also listed in the directory. George Washington's River Farm, the headquarters of the American Horticultural Society, is included among these recommended public gardens.

The directory, which costs \$15.95 (plus \$4.50 shipping and handling), is available by sending a check to the Garden Conservancy at P.O. Box 219, Cold Spring, NY 10516 or by calling (888) 842-2442. You can also order the directory or find out more about the Conservancy by visiting its Web site at www.GardenConservancy.org.

DIAZINON PHASE-OUT

FOLLOWING ON THE heels of its recent decision to phase out the organophosphate pesticide chlorpyrifos (September/October 2000 "Gardener's Notebook"), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced in December a similar elimination of certain uses of diazinon, one of the most widely used pesticides in homes and gardens. Under the agreement with the EPA, products containing diazinon will gradually be phased out and retail sales will end by 2003.

As with chlorpyrifos, EPA's decision to eliminate diazinon was made under the auspices of the Food Quality Protection Act, which calls for tougher restrictions on pesticides believed to be of greatest risk to children. Diazinon is one of the most commonly found pesticides in air, rain, and drinking water. It is also highly toxic to wildlife—particularly birds.

Once diazinon is no longer available, gardeners will need to select alternative pesticides, or shift to holistic techniques such as integrated pest management. "These bans will push the industry to develop new materials," says Michael Weaver, pesticide coordinator and professor of entomology at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. "There are a lot of reduced-risk pesticides on the horizon, but it generally takes at least 10 years to move materials through the approval process."



To Laura Johnson, the really beautiful thing about Preen is what she doesn't see.

Like most gardeners, Laura hates weeds. Which is why she loves Preen. With **Preen**, she never even sees them—**Preen** prevents weeds, before they even start, around nearly 200 bulbs, flowers, roses, shrubs, trees and vegetables.

And there's **Preen 'n Green**, which prevents weeds **and** fertilizes your existing plants. There's also new **Preen for Ground Covers**, a unique weed preventer created specifically for use with ground covers, like daylilies, pansies, ice plant and pachysandra.

They couldn't be easier to use—just sprinkle the granules into the soil or mulch, then gently water-in. No mess, no mixing, and no weeds for up to three months—guaranteed! And if you already have weeds, it's not too late—simply get rid of your existing weeds and then apply **Preen**.

So if, like Laura, your idea of a beautiful garden view doesn't include weeds, look for **Preen** products at your local gardening retailer. And discover the joys of weed-free gardening.



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Pesticide experts urge people not to throw unused pesticides in the trash or pour them down the drain. "From an environmental standpoint," notes Weaver, "it's far better to safely use them up than to dispose of them improperly."

For more information, visit the EPA Web site at www.epa.gov/pesticides.

NOMINATE A NATIONAL TREE

IF YOU'RE a devoted tree hugger like Henry David Thoreau, who wrote that he "frequently tramped eight or 10 miles through deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech tree," you may be interested in casting your vote for a national tree. The National Arbor Day Foundation (NAADF), based in Lincoln, Nebraska, is seeking nominations for a tree that could become our official national symbol. The voting will conclude, not coincidentally, at midnight on April 27, National Arbor Day.



Blue spruce—could it be our national tree?

The foundation has put forward 21 generic "candidates" for the honor—including bald cypress, birch, dogwood, holly, magnolia, palm, pine, redwood, and spruce—but is also accepting write-in votes. You can learn more about the candidates and cast your vote by visiting the foundation's Web site at www.arborday.org, or write your selection on an index card and mail it to: National Tree, NAADF, Nebraska City, NE 68410.

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