
Wildflower Spot – November 2014
John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

SEASIDE GOLDENROD

Solidago sempervirens

By Helen Hamilton, *Past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS*

Of the many goldenrods in Virginia, this is the only one with thick fleshy leaves that have smooth toothless edges. Firm stems with numerous narrow leaves reach up to 6 feet from a rosette of narrow, lance-shaped leaves. A spray of bright yellow flower heads are in curved, one-sided clusters, forming a large mass of blossoms at the ends of stems. Blooming from August-November, goldenrods are a magnet for butterflies, bees, wasps, hoverflies, all preparing for the winter. On a sunny day the blossoms will be covered with busily foraging insects of all shapes and sizes.

This is a plant of marshes and sandy soil near the sea, growing at the edge of salt or brackish marshes, on small dunes and in meadows. Occurring only in the Coastal Plain in Virginia, Seaside Goldenrod is found in salty places along the coast from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to tropical America. The plant has spread inland locally, especially along highways that are salted in winter, reportedly even as far west as Michigan.

Species of goldenrod were used by Native Americans for toothaches, colds, heart disease, sore throats, fevers, cramps, and internal hemorrhage. When the Omaha were on the



summer buffalo hunt, the sight of goldenrod indicated that their corn was beginning to ripen at home. The name comes from Latin *solidus*, and *ago*, “to make whole”, because this group of plants supposedly heals wounds. ❖

Photo: Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) taken by Helen Hamilton
For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.