

## August - Week 2

## Wind Pollination. . . Achoo!

**Step outside on an August day** and if there is a breeze you may immediately notice that many wildflowers are in bloom. Does your nose tickle? A, A, Achoo! The nature notes in the Minnesota Weatherguide Environment Calendar and Almanac state that the first shedding of common ragweed pollen occurs in early August.

Those who experience seasonal allergies are already aware of plants like ragweed, with small green flowers that produce large amounts of tiny pollen grains carried by the wind this time of year. Aside from three species of ragweed in Minnesota there are many other plants that rely on the wind to aid their pollination. Evidence of the high pollen counts can be found as yellow or green dust that coats outdoor furniture, cars, and even windows. Pollen grains can also be found by using ones finger to wipe the surface of plant leaves. Be careful though as you disturb the pollen grains...it may lead to a sneeze.

This week, go outside in search of evidence of wind pollination in action. Wait, bring some tissues if you are sensitive to the vast amount of pollen grains floating and blowing through the mid-summer air. Look closely at natural and human made surfaces. Do you see a coating of flower pollen? If you have a hand lens, examine flowers and their pollen grains closely. Can you see pollen grains on the flowers? Whether you take a close look or experience pollen grains and high pollen counts with reactions like an itchy nose or watery eyes, take a couple of minutes to consider the wind pollination phenomenon.

Write a story or narrative from the perspective of a plant like ragweed. Will the pollen grains reach their intended target? Do the plants “know” what side effects they cause people? Describe a message you could write on a surface coated with pollen. Who would get the message? Won’t it be erased by the wind or the next rainfall?

