

August - Week 4

*Goldenrods in Bloom,
Supporting an Entire Community*

Flowers in bloom at the end of summer can be home to an entire community of invertebrates. Goldenrods are one such type of flower. Actually there are 15 species of Goldenrod in Minnesota. They are characterized by a large cluster or spike of golden flowers atop a stem that may be 2 to 5 feet tall. Goldenrods are typically found in prairies, along woodland edges, and in roadside ditches. They send up new plants from their roots which often lead to the formation of large patches of Goldenrods, sometimes up to thirty feet wide.

In late summer many invertebrates can be found amongst the Goldenrod flowers or on their stems. Some invertebrates such as the jagged ambush bug and a variety of spiders, camouflage themselves in the flowers. Several species of beetles, flies, bees and butterflies visit to drink the nectar, eat pollen, and to feed on other insects. Some insects even use the goldenrod stem as a 'nursery'. The nurseries appear as round or oval bumps on the stem. These bumps are known as galls.

This week, go outside in search of a patch of Goldenrod or other late-summer blooming flowers such as Coneflowers or Black-eyed Susan. Move slowly in or along the edge of the flower patch. Look closely. Do you see insects or spiders visiting the flowers? What kinds of invertebrates do you see? Are any of them camouflaged, matching the flower color? Are any brightly colored? Do you find spiders or spider webs? Are their insects or insect signs on the leaves or stems, including galls? Document your findings in your journal including lists of critters, counts, sketches, and more.

