THE RHODE ISLAND WILD PLANT SOCIETY

Cultivation Notes

#3 September 1988

Seaside Goldenrod

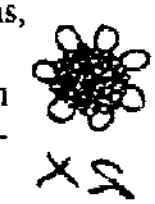
Solidago sempervirens L.
A Rhode Island Native Plant

Family ASTERACEAE
by Gilbert George

This plant deserves a place in our gardens, as it is a most handsome, striking plant, with the largest flowers of all our native goldenrods. It has large, fleshy leaves and is adaptable to all kinds of soils. This hardy perennial is found at the seashore, growing in bare sand above the high tide line; amazingly it grows well in this sterile environment. It is also found growing in muck at the edges of coastal marshes, where it is often inundated by very high tides. Unlike most other plants, it can be planted along roads that are salted in winter. It usually grows in full sun, but will grow in high shade as well.

Goldenrods have long been cultivated by the British, but many gardeners here erroneously associate goldenrods with allergies. The real culprit is Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*), which flowers at the same time but has small, greenish, inconspicuous flowers and is easily overlooked, unlike the showy goldenrods. The goldenrods, however, are pollinated by insects, while Ragweed pollen is wind-disseminated and hence the major villain for hay-fever sufferers.

Seaside Goldenrod may grow up to eight feet, but are usually three to four feet high. A mature plant has many stems. The succulent leaves are one to three inches wide and up to a foot or more in length. The basal leaves are the largest. Most plants have upright stems, but some have drooping stems that require staking. The flowers are greenish-yellow with seven to seventeen petals and grow up to one-quarter inch in diameter. This plant occasionally hybridizes with *Solidago rugosa* (Rough-leaved Goldenrod), with which it is usually found, but fortunately it lacks the invasive qualities of the Rough-leaved Goldenrod, since it does not spread from its roots.



CULTIVATION NOTES

Solidago sempervirens L. Seaside Goldenrod

Perennial. Blooms from July until frost. Found in full sun to high shade along sandy coasts and salt marshes; will thrive in wild gardens and cultivated borders.

Seed Collection:

Collect a few flower heads in November and air dry them for about a week. Seeds can be stored in the refrigerator until ready to plant.

Propagation:

From seed: The germination of seaside goldenrod is very good. I use a soil mixture of one part coarse sand, one part sterilized soil, and one part "Pro-Mix" (any good soilless seedling mix can be used instead of the Pro-Mix). Lightly cover seeds with milled sphagnum moss to prevent damp-off. I start mine in November, in order to have flowering plants for the next growing season.

When the seedlings develop true leaves, prick them out and pot them up separate pots. The seedlings are trouble-free and will adapt to almost any soil or shade condition.

From divisions: Divide in the spring.

Cultivation:

Grow in full sun to high shade. Pinch back the growing tips in June to produce a more compact plant.

KEEP RECORDS and **keep RIWPS informed.** The more sources of information we have, the more we will learn about our native plants and how to cultivate them. And remember, don't take plants from the wild: take them only from areas on your own property, or from properties you have permission to dig on. Good luck.

Personal Notes:

References:

Phillips, Harry R. 1985. *Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers*. NC Press, Chapel Hill, NC.
Taylor, Kathryn S. and S. F. Hamblin. 1963. *Handbook of Wild Flower Cultivation*. Collier Books, NY.
Tenenbaum, Frances. 1973. *Gardening with Wildflowers*. Charles Scribner's Sons, NY.

Illustration by Gil George.