

Weekly MSU Extension Service column, James Shannon, MSU Extension Agent, for release August 19, 2020.

This article is the third installment describing wildflowers I have observed while driving along Friendship Road in northern Pontotoc County. Today, I will discuss species that emerge during the dog days of summer.

Wildflowers can be scarce during this hot and dry time of summer. This period can be tough on honeybees and other pollinators that rely on nectar and pollen. It also makes my morning drive to the Extension office very boring. Fortunately, as we inch toward fall the beautiful flowers from goldenrod and woodland sunflower emerge.

The sources used in this article include information from Dr. Gary Bachman, Dr. Victor Maddox, and from the website www.illinoiswildflowers.info.

Goldenrod

Goldenrod is a native perennial wildflower that readily grows along roadsides and in abandoned fields. It begins blooming in August before the cool temperatures of fall finally arrive. As the name suggests, the golden blooms provide great late season color as the oppressive summer heat takes its toll on most other flowering plants.

There are several species of goldenrod that grow across most of the United States. The most common in Mississippi is European goldenrod. European goldenrod grows to around four feet in height and has flowers that grow on arching branches near the top of the plant.

Woodland Sunflower

Woodland sunflower is a native perennial that is a member of the aster family. They can range from two feet to near seven feet in height. Woodland sunflowers grow in clumps in relatively open areas along roadsides, abandoned fields, and in forests.

Woodland sunflowers have opposite lance shaped leaves. Each set of leaves forms a 90 degree angle with the leaves located below. The flowers range from near one inch to three inches in width. They have eight to fifteen yellow flower petals with a raised golden center. The seeds produced by woodland sunflower are a food source for a variety of wildlife including song-birds, mourning dove, bobwhite quail, and squirrels.

As summer drags on, I hope you enjoy the beautiful displays and appreciate the benefits that goldenrod and woodland sunflower provide.



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