

They Call It Mellow Yellow

Written by Will Balk, Jr.

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There's something predictable about the burst of bloom which appears as the too intense heat and sun of midsummer start to wane. There's so much yellow, as if the high solstice of June left shards of itself to reappear as rayed flowers to carry on its brilliant intensity into the fall.

Roadsides and ditches, places where moisture sometimes accumulates, offer tempting spots for several of these handsome native species. The Giant Sunflower, *Helianthus giganteus*, will show up in great clumps of tall reddish stems cloaked in dark green leaves. Growing easily to ten feet in height, the Giant Sunflower will celebrate October with massive heads of dozens of sunflower blooms over several weeks. You will understand that the name comes not from the size of the individual flower, but from the height of the plant.

In similar sites in late summer, there is often a much lower-growing yellow daisy-flowered plant, the garden coreopsis, *Coreopsis tinctoria*. Growing perhaps four feet tall, the coreopsis flower has a distinct reddish-brown spot at the base of the yellow petals. The even shorter lance-leaved coreopsis, growing to two feet, lacks the brownish spot on the petal; it blooms in late spring and appears in drier sandy locations.

The goldenrods, all in the genus *Solidago*, comprise dozens of different kinds of plants and

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