

LE SUEUR COUNTY NEWS

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GENERAL INFORMATION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
The *Le Sueur County News*

Le Sueur County Extension: Goldenrod — a global invasive?

Late summer tends to be the time for all the yellow wildflowers to display their color. One imagines sunflowers, primroses, coneflowers, and many others waving in a gusty wind. However, in certain regions of the globe, one of these showy prairie plants is considered “the most successful and widespread invasive plant species” — the goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.).

Thought to be introduced to Asia and Europe via gardeners, goldenrods have managed to cause havoc across the globe. Three Minnesota natives that are commonly put on worldwide “most wanted” lists include Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*), and giant goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*). These hardy plants tolerate disturbed areas, grow in different moisture regimes, spread multiple different



Author's View
Shane Bugeja

ways, and are all perennial.

Aside from simply shading out nearby vegetation, goldenrods have also been implicated in changing the soil chemistry around them. They do this by decreasing plant available nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, starving their neighbors. Similar to black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) or garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), goldenrods are also thought to be allelopathic. Allelopathic species release chemicals in the soil to hurt nearby plants, fungi, or microbes. While goldenrod pollen and nectar sources benefit certain flies and spiders in Europe and Asia, it comes with a

cost to their beetles and bees. Even European birds were noted to be less abundant in goldenrod patches.

Usually when we hear about invasive species in the media, Europe and especially Asia are mentioned as where these creatures originate. Indeed, buckthorns (*Rhamnus* spp.), emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), or Japanese beetles (*Popillia japonica*) do come from those areas. These pests pose serious dangers to our agricultural, economic, and environmental health. However, we also need to realize that North America has played a role too in spreading damaging pests—even aside from goldenrod. These include raccoons (*Procyon* spp.), Colorado potato beetles (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*), and ragweed (*Ambrosia* spp.). We export much to the world just as we import much. Invasive species are no different, but it is easy

to reside in our bubble when we hear about a new one entering Minnesota.

Important to note there is no Olympic medal for “least damaging exported pest.” Instead of fostering resentment about different countries, I was encouraged by the plans for an invasive species lesson between Owatonna Public Schools and a sister school in Japan. Students from both countries can learn about their invasive “exports” and how they affect each ecosystem. In that case, invasive species can be more of a grey area than a black and white one. Perhaps it can also be a shade of yellow, depending on where those goldenrods bloom.

Shane Bugeja Extension Educator for Blue Earth and Le Sueur counties — Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources.



Gail Gilman: The difference between servings and portion sizes

Don't let your eyes get bigger than your stomach! Watching how much you eat can help you maintain a healthy weight. A “serving” is how much of each type of food you should eat to meet recommended daily nutrition requirements. A “portion” is how much of a single food is actually on your dish. The amount can vary from meal to meal.

When eating your daily meals:

- Stop eating when you are satisfied, not full. If there's still food on your plate, save it for another time.
- Use a smaller plate, bowl, or glass to help you eat and drink less.
- Order an item from the menu instead of heading for the “all-you-can-eat” buffet.
- Skip the “super sizes.”
- Share a restaurant entrée with a friend or eat just half and take home the rest.

- Read *What's on Your Plate?*, the National Institute on Aging guide to healthy eating.
- Visit www.choosemyplate.gov to see how much to eat from each food group based on your age, sex and physical activity level.

Picture a serving size with these examples:

- 1 3 ounces of meat or poultry = a deck of cards
- 1 1-1/2 ounces of hard cheese = four dice
- 1 2 tablespoons of cream cheese = a golf ball
- 1 1 cup of salad or cooked vegetables = a baseball
- 1 3 ounces grilled/baked fish = checkbook

Quick Tip
Put leftovers in the refrigerator within 2 hours if not sooner. Then enjoy them the next day for lunch or dinner.

Information adapted from article by Go4Life, National Institute on Aging, National Institute of Health, United States Department of Health and Human Services.

If you would like more information on “Serving and Portion Sizes” contact Gail Gilman, Family Life Consultant, M.Ed., C.F.C.S. and Professor Emeritus University of Minnesota at waldn001@umn.edu.

TODAY IN HISTORY — FEB. 19



This Jan. 4, 1984 file photo shows Fred Rogers, star of Public Television's “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.” On Feb. 18, 1968, the children's program “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” created by and starring Fred Rogers, made its network debut on National Educational Television, a forerunner of PBS, beginning a 31-season run. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar, file)

Mayo Clinic: Easy tips to improve your heart health

February is Heart Health Awareness month, so now is a great time to complete a status check on one of the most important organs in your body.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in every four deaths in the United States is due to heart disease. It continues to be the leading cause of death for both men and women. That's more than 647,000 people each year! Take time to consider the following information and tips to ensure you're making efforts to keep your heart as healthy as can be.

Prevention

Start making basic lifestyle changes to reduce your risk of



Author's View
Niti R. Aggarwal

keep it that way.

- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all. Heavy alcohol use is detrimental to your heart health. Although some research indicates moderate consumption of certain alcoholic beverages may have positive health effects, limiting your intake to a maximum of one drink per day or abstaining from alcohol altogether is best.

- Be active. Try to do aerobic exercise for at least 20 to 30 min-

als. You need to exercise regularly and lower portion sizes and calorie intake at meals to lose weight or maintain a healthy size. Simply put, to lose weight you must burn more calories than you consume.

- Eat a nutritious diet. Healthy and fresh food choices — such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes — lower your risk of obesity, heart disease and diabetes, as well as make you feel better than when you eat processed and junk food.

- Control your risk factors. Get physical examinations or checkups at least yearly. Doing so will help you monitor health conditions and allow your provider to examine you for high blood pressure (hyperten-

— although uncontrollable — can be problematic. This makes staying on top of heart health increasingly important. A family history of heart disease puts you at an elevated risk, and you're even more susceptible if a male family member developed heart disease before age 55 or a female family member developed heart disease before age 65.

Complications of heart disease Heart disease can result in significant complications and death. Complications include heart failure, heart attack, stroke, aneurysm, peripheral artery disease and sudden cardiac arrest.

Use this information to put your heart at the forefront of your wellness improvement plan. If you