

September Plant of the Month



Bidens laevis (L.) BSP, Large Bur Marigold

The Plant of the Month for September is the Large Bur Marigold, *Bidens laevis*. This large, herbaceous annual composite is a member of the Asteraceae, and is classified within the tribe Heliantheae. Bur marigold is a welcome sight to anyone familiar with the freshwater tidal marshes in New Jersey. The freshwater tide marshes are confined to the Delaware River system below Trenton, the tidal sections of the Atlantic draining streams such as the Great Egg Harbor, Mullica, and Tom's River. It is also found in the tidal Raritan River and the Hudson River system as well.

The plant is indistinguishable at the height of the summer when growing in the mass of green marsh vegetation, but it becomes the most prominent and visible plant when it starts flowering in late August. The large, colorful flowers are composed of bright yellow ray and disk flowers that are borne on stiff stems lined with toothed, lanceolate, opposite leaves. The flowers eventually form distinct achenes. These achenes are sought by fall migrating birds and are one of the plant's identifying characteristics. The display is accented by the pale yellows of the maturing wild rice and the declining low marsh emergent plants such as arrow arum, spatterdock and pickerelweed. The display continues well into early October.

Anyone not familiar with this species can see it in full display now. It is at its best flowering in full sun at the edge of the high and low marshes that form our freshwater marshes.