Introduction

- A discussion our airborne pollen business and the collecting opportunities it offers.
- Presented by:
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About Allergon

- In business since 1980 near Carthage, Missouri
- Two parent companies:
  - Administrative: Pharmacia & Upjohn, Kalamazoo, Michigan
  - Raw material (pollen) supplier for: Allergon AB, Sweden

Why Pollen?

- Certain products used in the treatment and diagnosis of allergies are manufactured from plant pollens.
  - Examples: Skin tests; therapy
- To meet the demands of the medical community, considerable quantities of pollen from many species are required.

What Types of Pollen Are Collected?

- Airborne pollens, from three main types of plants:
  - Trees (mainly in the spring)
  - Grasses (mainly in the summer)
  - Weeds (mainly in late summer and fall)
- Some examples include elm, maple, junipers, willows, ragweed, cocklebur, johnsongrass, etc.
- Not insect-pollinated flowers (heavy/sticky pollen)

What is Pollen?

- The pollen grain is the carrier of the “male” sex cell.
- Produced by the flower another, sometimes in large quantities
  - A microscopic “grain.”
  - Most plant species can be identified by their pollen.
  - Outer wall (exine) may carry allergenic proteins.
  - Flower types:
    - Male & Female components in same flower
    - Male & Female components in different flowers on same plant
    - Male & Female components in different flowers on different plants
  - Flower structures are important to know (particularly anthers).

Pollen Flower Collection: What Allergon Does

- Our role involves:
  - Collecting plant flowers (or arranging to have flowers collected).
  - Ensuring correct identification of the material
  - Drying the collected materials
  - Processing (by various mechanical methods) to “shake” the pollen out of the flowers
  - Shipping rough pollen to Sweden for finishing
- Collection is done by a variety of means:
  - Trimming trees and hand-stripping the flowers
  - Hand-stripping the flowers without trimming the trees
  - Trimming trees and collecting branchlets and flowers
  - Vacuuming the pollen directly off the flowers
  - Mechanical harvesting
  - Hand-picking
  - Tree shaking

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Pollen Flower Collection: What You Do As A Collector

- A “flower” collector, rather than a “pollen” collector
- Under our direction, you would:
  - Locate and collect flowers based on our need.
  - Dry the flowers, using your own equipment or that provided by Allergon.
  - Ship the dried flowers to Allergon.

Pollen Collection: It’s Not For Everyone

- Some requirements and things to know:
  - Requires a commitment of work and time.
  - You will not get rich, but depending on species and amount collected, it might be a good source of additional income.
  - We don’t generally ask for small amounts from collectors (i.e., if you don’t plan to collect at least $1000-worth, it’s probably not worth collecting).

If You Want To Collect

- Some things to know:
  - Collecting is often done during “slow” periods of some businesses (i.e., forestry, timber, herb & medicinal plant collection, farming, etc.).
  - Collecting often works well in tandem with other business, such as tree-trimming, forestry, farming, etc.
  - Collecting promotes appreciation of the natural world in the pollen is yet another resource (not often considered).

How the Process Works:

- Allergon receives its pollen orders after the first of each year.
- At that time we determine which pollens we can collect ourselves, and which pollens with which we need others to help us.
- We than contact various collectors to determine whether they can collect for us.

How the Process Works: Initial Collection

- Allergon will visit the collector and site to confirm species location and identification.
- Will provide guidance as to collecting methods, and assist in initial collecting (if necessary).
- Will provide drying systems (if one cannot provide one’s own) and shipping boxes.
- Will provide any other support as needed.

How The Process Works: An Established Collector

- Once a collector has worked for us, we simply contact them in following years and, depending on need, assign a certain quantity of plant material for them to collect.
- We provide shipping materials and any other guidance, if necessary.

How The Process Works: Getting Paid

- Allergon’s payment is based on the expected yield of pollen for an amount of dried plant material, thus we pay by the pound of dried plant material.
- Value of pollen varies from species to species, but each species’ price remains fairly constant from year to year.
- Prices per pound (dry weight) may vary form $5.00 to $40.

A Not On Demand For Pollen

- For several species, such as ragweed, elm, cocklebur, and some maples there is a consistent, year-after-year demand for us to collect.
- For many others, demand is variable and difficult to predict.
- Some species we need only every few years.
- Important: be flexible and don’t try to rely too heavily on pollen as a source of income.

A Final Note

- Check over our needs list and see if you have (or have access to) one or more species on the list.
- Determine whether you are willing to make the commitment to collect.
- Provide your name and contact information to us and we will contact you as the need arises.