

# It's Not Your Imagination – Your Fall Allergies Are Worse Than Ever

By Jane Purnell | Published: November 12, 2025

Lawn Care Tips



Laura De La Cruz has wrestled with year-round allergies for as long as she can remember. And unlike many springtime allergy sufferers who find relief from congestion and sneezing in the fall, she receives no such courtesy from Mother Nature.

“You would think spring allergies are the worst, but no. For me it’s the fall,” said De La Cruz, from Round Hill, Va.

Fall declared war on De La Cruz’s allergies about 10 years ago, intensifying her already nagging symptoms. To manage the onslaught, she stepped up her asthma medication,

consulted allergists, and started allergy shots. Claritin, tissues, and nasal spray are her constant companions.

All that helped, but her allergies still linger and may only get worse.

She and millions of allergy sufferers are learning a hard truth: Fall allergies are worsening and becoming more common, likely fueled by a warming trend that causes longer growing seasons for allergy-inducing weeds and plants, researchers say.

## In this article:

- [What causes fall allergies?](#)
- [Why experts expect the fall allergy season to worsen](#)
- [How to manage fall allergies](#)
  - [Monitor pollen levels](#)
  - [Improve indoor air quality](#)
  - [Practice smart yard care](#)

## Meet Our Featured Fall Allergy Experts and Sufferers



## What causes fall allergies?



An estimated 10 to 20 percent of Americans are allergic to ragweed. Photo Credit: [Yevhenii](#) / Adobe Stock

The culprits aren't just tree and grass pollen. Those allergens mostly cause spring allergies.

Ragweed is the leading cause of fall allergies, afflicting an estimated 10 to 20 percent of all Americans.

And these numbers are likely to grow due to warmer temperatures that allow ragweed and other plants and molds to thrive longer into the fall, according to Dr. Leonard Bielory, professor of medicine, allergy, immunology and ophthalmology at Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine.

Put another way, the fall warming trend is delaying the late-season frosts that kill ragweed and keep spores from other allergens at bay. As a result, the fall allergy season that historically peaks in mid-September is now peaking weeks – sometimes many weeks – later.

“Ongoing climate changes, coupled with urbanization and longer frost-free seasons, are likely to expand both the intensity and duration of (ragweed) exposure,” Bielory said. “At the same time, warmer and wetter autumns encourage outdoor mold growth, adding to the overall allergen burden.”

## Why experts expect the fall allergy season to worsen



Ragweed allergies can be worse in urban areas, according to experts. Photo Credit: [Maryna](#) / Adobe Stock

Studies consistently show a link between increasing carbon dioxide concentrations and the production of ragweed pollen.

One study conducted in an environmentally controlled greenhouse found that doubling the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration stimulated ragweed pollen production by 61%.

In another experiment, Lewis H. Ziska and Frances A. Caulfield measured ragweed pollen production at pre-industrial, present-day, and projected 21st-century CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations.

They found that current CO<sub>2</sub> levels increased pollen production by 131% over pre-industrial levels and projected that pollen production would increase by 320% if CO<sub>2</sub> levels continued to rise at their current rate.

“Allergy seasons will continue to worsen as the earth heats further, which is inevitable if we don’t rapidly transition away from burning oil, coal, and gas,” said Dr. Jonathan Patz, the John P. Holton Endowed Chair of Health and the Environment at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ragweed is a menace in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern states, but a study by Michael J. Case and Kristina A. Stinson suggests its range could expand into the colder Northeastern United States, which is affected more by warming trends.

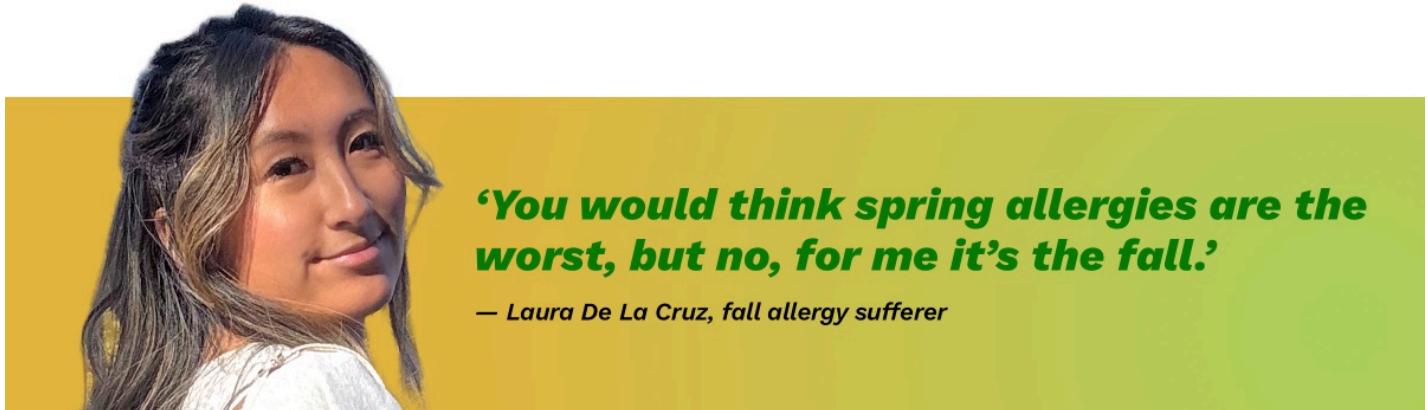


Illustration by Whitney Lehnecker / Lawn Love; Photo submitted by Laura De La Cruz

According to a study co-authored by Dr. Patz, the ragweed pollen season has been increasing in northern latitudes in North America. When measuring the ragweed pollen season in 1995 and again in 2009, the study found an increase in ragweed’s pollen season at higher latitudes in 8 of the 10 locations studied.

This table demonstrates the longer ragweed seasons at higher latitudes.

Location	Latitude	Change
Georgetown, Texas	30.63°N	-4 days
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	35.47°N	+1 day
Rogers, Arkansas	36.33°N	-3 days
Papillion, Nebraska	41.15°N	+11 days
Madison, Wisconsin	43.00°N	+12 days
LaCrosse, Wisconsin	43.80°N	+13 days
Minneapolis, Minnesota	45.00°N	+16 days
Fargo, North Dakota	46.88°N	+16 days
Winnipeg, MB, Canada	50.07°N	+25 days
Saskatoon, SK, Canada	52.07°N	+27 days

Dr. Bielory, who is also Kean University Director of the Center for Aerobiological Research at Rutgers University's Center for Environmental Prediction, agrees that "even small shifts in average autumn temperatures can prolong pollen production by several weeks — particularly in the central U.S. and mid-Atlantic regions."

Ragweed is also a menace in urban areas, somewhat surprisingly.

Ragweed plants are more common in rural areas, typically growing alongside roads and riverbanks, and in vacant lots and abandoned buildings. Yet, allergy sufferers in cities often experience more severe symptoms.

That's because urban areas tend to trap heat, a phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect, because of their dense buildings, air pollution, and limited vegetation. These warmer conditions encourage higher pollen counts, resulting in worse allergy symptoms for city residents.

## How to manage fall allergies



Medications and nasal spray can help curb the effects of fall ragweed allergies. Photo Credit: [Anna](#) / Adobe Stock

To manage fall allergies, you have to first be sure you *have* fall allergies, and not something else like the flu or COVID-19.

If you're experiencing itchiness and clear mucus, along with fatigue and watery eyes, it's most likely fall allergies, says Dr. Larry Borish, professor of Medicine and Microbiology at the University of Virginia.

"Colds produce thick purulent [consisting of or discharging pus] nasal secretions, sore throat, only occasional sneezing, and no itching," he said.

If it's COVID-19, look out for an incredibly sore throat, fever, and all the cold symptoms.

Dr. Borish recommends treating allergy symptoms with non-sedating antihistamines, such as fexofenadine (known by its brand name, Allegra), loratadine, or cetirizine. He also recommended over-the-counter intranasal corticosteroids, such as fluticasone and triamcinolone.



**'For persistent symptoms despite standard measures, allergy shots remain the most effective long-term strategy.'**

— Dr. Leonard Bielory, professor of medicine, allergy, immunology and ophthalmology at Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine

Illustration by Whitney Lehnecker / Lawn Love; Photo submitted by Leonard Bielory

Longtime allergy sufferer Ali Cheraghpour of Washington, DC, uses nasal spray to relieve his stuffy nose and open his nasal passages. He also tries to make good lifestyle choices.

"I try to stay hydrated, get enough sleep, exercise, and eat fruit and vegetables," he said. "As long as I do those things, for the most part, I'm OK."

"For persistent symptoms despite standard measures, allergy shots remain the most effective long-term strategy," Dr. Bielory said.

De La Cruz began taking allergy shots a few years after her symptoms worsened. While she did not complete the entire course of shots, she said treatments did reduce her symptoms significantly.

## Monitor pollen levels



Illustration by Whitney Lehnecker / Lawn Love; Photo submitted by Dawn Jurgens

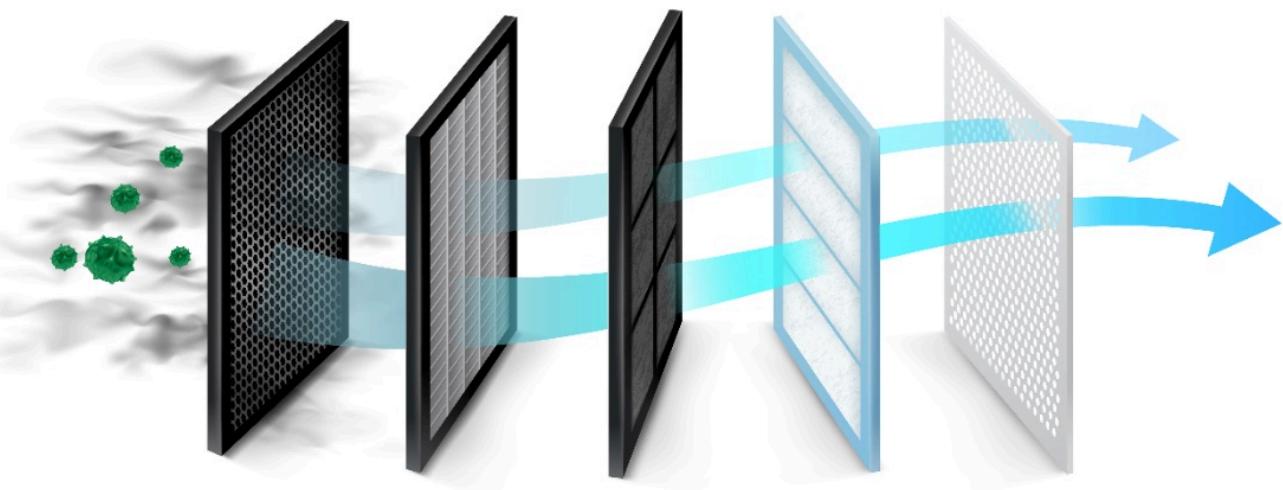
“The best way to combat allergies in any season is to know what is in the air and plan your outdoor activities accordingly,” said Dawn Jurgens, director of operations at Aerobiology Research Laboratories.

ARL developed an app that allows people to see what is in the air. The premium version, available by subscription, allows you to monitor for specific allergens and receive notifications when their levels start to rise.

“It also allows you to track your symptoms and medication use and correlate with allergen levels,” Jurgens said. “It is very useful for allergy sufferers as well as their allergist.”

Other ways to monitor pollen levels include visiting [pollen.com](https://pollen.com) or the [National Allergy Bureau](https://www.nationalallergybureau.com).

## Improve indoor air quality



Purify air during fall allergy season. Photo Credit: [Vectorman2017](#) / Adobe Stock

De La Cruz takes extra steps to allergy-proof her home to prevent pollen from finding its way indoors and into her nose.

"If I go outside — because I have to walk the dogs — I make sure to change my clothes as soon as I come in, because you don't want to bring (pollen) in," she said. "I have to wash my bedding a lot more frequently... in really, really hot water."

She also puts an allergen protective cover over her pillow, wipes her dogs' paws to ensure they don't track pollen indoors, and runs an air purifier year-round.

You can also improve your home's air quality by closing windows and doors to keep pollen out, running the air conditioner, using HEPA filters, and showering after being outdoors.

## Practice smart yard care



A young ragweed plant grows in a residential lawn. Photo Credit: [vladk213](#) / Adobe Stock

Ragweed is typically a problem in crop fields, but the weed can quickly take over a lawn or garden if its seeds find their way to your yard.

- **Apply herbicide.** Clemson University Cooperative Extension recommends applying glyphosate to ragweed plants when they're still small and less than 12 inches tall. If needed, reapply the glyphosate another 3 to 4 weeks after the initial application.
- **Hand-pull the ragweed** while wearing work gloves to avoid getting dermatitis or a rash.
- **Mow regularly** to help limit ragweed from flowering and releasing seeds in the lawn.
- **Remove yard debris** like fallen leaves that may harbor mold spores and pollen.
- **Keep it simple.** Hire a [Lawn Love professional](#) to mow, weed, and rake.

Are grass pollen, tree pollen, or mold activating your spring allergy symptoms? Check out this guide for [Allergy-Free Landscaping Ideas](#) and gardening tips.

## Stay indoors and hire a lawn care pro



Lawn maintained by a Lawn Love pro in Indianapolis, Indiana. Photo Credit: [Lawn Love](#)

With experts expecting climate change to lengthen ragweed's growing season, allergy sufferers ought to prepare for worsening symptoms. Consult with an allergist, take the right medication, protect your home, and practice allergy-friendly yard care and landscaping.

Lawn Love can help defend your yard from pollen and mold by connecting you with a lawn care professional. Hire a pro to [mow the grass](#), [control weeds](#), and [remove leaves](#) so that you can focus on the new school year, fall's holidays, and booking your next allergist appointment.

Main Image: Illustration by Whitney Lehnecker / Lawn Love; Photos from [Adobe Stock](#)

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**Jane Purnell**

Jane Purnell is an artist, writer, and nature lover. She enjoys teaching readers about the importance of eco-friendly lawn care, integrated pest management, biodiversity, and sustainable landscaping.

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