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COLUMNS

Campbell Vaughn: Pollen is a part of life. Sure, it makes a mess, but it's necessary.

Campbell Vaughn Columnist

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I was putting my final touches on my biannual work truck scrubbing. Not 20 minutes later, the Lord said let the southeastern United States be yellow and the next installment of Georgia's weather begins.

My truck was mostly clean for a few minutes at least. Maybe I should have taken a picture.

It is now pollen season. I know every spring before Masters we are going to get a deluge of yellow and it is here and it is about to get serious.

Just to be clear, the yellow stuff is pine pollen. Since we have copious amounts of pine trees, we are bound to get caught in the crossfire of the spring time mating of our native conifers. Pollen is the male part of a plant's life. It isn't good or bad. It's just there in great volume every spring.

Just like corn, pine trees are wind pollenated as opposed to insect pollenated, so pollination for them is a numbers game. These giant plants release huge amounts of pollen into the air every year to cover every possible surface indoors and outdoors 3 inches thick for 2,500 miles to assure any seed available will be fertilized.

The actual size of pine pollen is large compared to other types of pollen, so it is easy to see when blowing in the wind. As the wind blows, it sweeps pollen up into the air and carries it long distances.

Pine pollen has its unique shape to perfectly match the aerodynamic shape of the female pinecone. The airborne pollen grains are swirled around the cone and tumble into the receptive base of each bract.

The male pinecones, which dangle at the ends of lower branches, have many pollen sacks which produce and hold pollen. As the male cones mature, they nurture the pollen grains.

Then on sunny, windy days with relatively low humidity, the pollen sacks split open. And then the world turns into a powdery yellow.

Campbell Vaughn: Vertical farming is a growing trend for growing crops up instead of out

A common misconception of pine pollen is that it is a terrible on allergies. Don't blame the pines for allergy attacks because the likely culprit is usually mold spores or oak and weed pollens. These culprits are so small they aren't visible to the naked eye.

If these allergens are driving you crazy, there are a few things you can do. Stay indoors during peak pollen times and venture out only on rainy days. Make sure to keep the house closed up to keep pollen from entering and quickly rinse surfaces to remove the dust which will likely contain pollen. But be careful, some pollens will scratch surfaces.

Pollen is a part of life. It's the trees' investment in the future. It makes a mess, but it will be gone shortly and then we can start focusing on golf.