

# SPOTLIGHT

## COMMON RAGWEED



Male flowers of common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) along Schuylkill River Trail, Center City.

In the last century ragweed pollen was blamed for causing more hay fever than all other plants combined.<sup>1</sup> Over the past five years, flowering ragweed has been absent in Center City except near railroad tracks by the river, where it has been scarce. Ragweed pollen counts have been falling in the United States in the East and Midwest since the mid-twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In Center City mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) may have contributed to ragweed's scarcity. Mugwort and ragweed colonize similar habitats. Mugwort is abundant here, having evolved competitive strains and expanded its range starting in the nineteenth century, as described in Chapter 19.