BWSR Featured Plant

Name: New England Aster (Symphyotrichum novae-angliae)

Plant Family: Aster

Large, composite flower heads

Few plant species produce an abundance of flowers like New England Aster. The species blooms from early to late fall along with goldenrods and other asters, adding color and pollinator habitat in mesic prairies, wet meadows and lakeshores. Growing up to five feet tall, the species competes well with most weeds and since it readily self-seeds it is a resilient species in a wide range of environmental conditions.

Statewide Wetland Indicator Status:

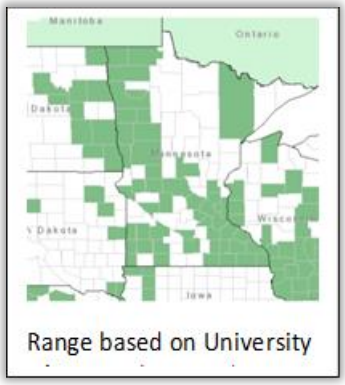
- FACW

New England Aster establishing from seed in a buffer planting

Identification

Clasping leaves and abundant hairs aid in the identification of New England aster when not in bloom. The individual leaves are lance shaped up to four inches long and are abundant along branches. They have auricles at the base of the leaves that clasp the stem. Many of the lower leaves turn brown and fall off as the season progresses. The composite flower heads are made up of yellow, central disk flowers and forty or more purple to dark pink ray flowers. The flowers are often crowded along the upper stems and bloom from September until frost. The bracts at the base of each composite flower have gland tipped hairs.

Range



With the ability to grow in a wide range of soil types and disturbed areas as well as intact natural areas the species is found in a variety of habitats including old fields, railways, mesic prairies, wet prairies, shorelines, wet meadows and conservation prairie plantings. The species is widespread throughout the "prairie region" of Minnesota including southern and western counties. It is found across the United States with the exception of Florida, Louisiana and Texas and a few western states.

Pubescent leaves, clasping the hairy stem

Developed by Dan Shaw

Uses

New England Aster is used as a late season pollen and nectar source for a wide range of pollinators including butterflies, skippers, native flies, honey bees, and a wide variety of native bees. The leaves are also eaten by several caterpillars and other insects. Native Americans used the species for a wide range of purposes including pain relief, fevers, and skin care. The species is eaten by some herbivores but its abundant hairs make it less palatable to most animals. The plants fibrous roots and rhizomes make it effective at stabilizing shorelines and its abundant flowers make it an attractive addition to prairie plantings and the upper edges of detention basins.

Primary Uses:
- Shoreline stabilization
- Pollinator Habitat
- Aesthetics

Planting Recommendations

Planting Methods
- Seed
- Bare Root Plants
- Containerized Plants
- Transplants

New England Aster can be planted by seed, containerized plants or by transplanting. When seeding into restoration projects it is recommended to seed in the fall, to allow winter conditions to naturally break dormancy and allow for germination when the conditions are suitable in the spring. The soil surface should be loosened prior to seeding and the tiny seeds (66,000 seeds per ounce) broadcast near the soil surface, followed by harrowing or rolling to improve seed to soil contact. When installed from containers the plants should be planted in moist soil and watered as needed until they develop sufficient root systems. The species can also be transplanted early in the spring or late in the fall after the plants go dormant.

Similar Species

Purple-stemmed Aster (*Symphyotrichum puniceum*) has leaves that are somewhat clasping, white hairs along the central leaf vein and a reddish stem compared to the green stem of New England Aster. It also has light blue flowers.

Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*) has clasping leaves but the stem and leaves are smooth and waxy compared to the hairy leaves and stems of New England Aster. It also has blue to violet flowers photo *by Katy Chayka , Minnesota Wildflowers*

References

Minnesota Wildflowers https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/new-england-aster
USDA Pants Database: http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=SYNO2