

# New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)

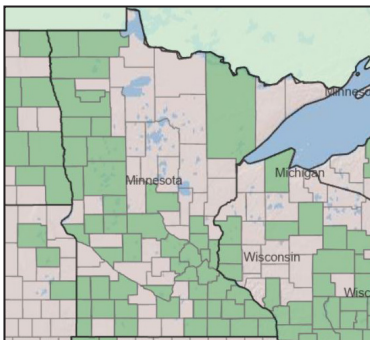
## Family: Aster (Asteraceae)

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the latest-blooming of Minnesota's native asters, New England asters add vibrant purples and pinks to fall landscapes across mesic prairies, wet meadows and lakeshores. Growing up to 5 feet tall, the species outcompetes most weeds and can grow in a wide range of conditions.

**USES:** The plant is a pollen and nectar source for native bee, hover fly, moth, and butterfly species, including monarch butterflies and rusty patched bumblebees. In Minnesota, it is the larval host plant for the pearl crescent butterfly; 12 species of specialist bees require the plant's pollen for their larva, including seven species of mining bees, two longhorn bees and three plasterer bees. The plant's fibrous roots make it effective at stabilizing shorelines. Native Americans used it to relieve pain, fevers and rashes.

### REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)  
[Minnesota Seasons](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Photo Credit: Alan Ritchie

**STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:** FACW

**ID:** Lance-shaped leaves, up to 4 inches long, clasp the stem and grow abundantly along branches. Composed of yellow central disk flowers with 40 to 100 purple to dark pink narrow petals, the flower heads grow up to 1½ inches wide, blooming from September until frost. Bracts at the base of each composite flower have gland-tipped hairs that release a spicy smell when crushed.

### SIMILAR SPECIES:

The leaves of purple-stemmed aster (*Symphyotrichum puniceum*) do not fully clasp the stem, and bristly hairs only exist along the central vein on the leaf's underside. While smooth blue aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*) leaves may clasp the stem, the leaves are exceptionally waxy and almost hairless. Both have light-colored flowers with fewer petals.

## Planting Recommendations

New England asters can be grown from seed, installed as containerized plants or transplanted. When seeding into restoration projects, fall seeding is recommended so winter conditions naturally break dormancy. The soil surface should be loosened prior to seeding and the tiny

seeds (66,000 per ounce) broadcast, followed by harrowing or rolling to improve seed-to-soil contact. Containerized plants should be installed in moist soil, and watered as needed until they develop sufficient root systems. Transplanting should be done in early spring or late fall after the plants go dormant.

Developed by Alan Ritchie, plant and pollinator ecologist, and assistant program analyst with the BWSR easement section

