

# Sky-blue aster (*Symphotrichum oolentangiense*)

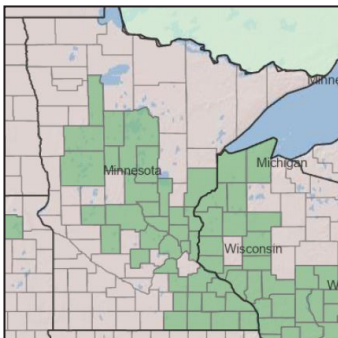
## Family: Asteraceae (Aster)

**DESCRIPTION:** Although sky-blue aster — also known as azure aster — is named for the color of its flowers, variations may produce blue-violet, pale violet and white flowers within a population or on a single plant. This native perennial is a late-season pollinator favorite, blooming from August into October.

**USES:** Its beauty and late-season pollen and nectar make sky-blue aster a popular choice for prairie and savanna restorations, pollinator plantings and gardens. The flowers are pollinated by a variety of bees, flies, beetles and butterflies. It is a larval host for silvery checkerspot and pearl crescent butterflies. More than 20 specialist bees visit this and other asters.

### REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)  
[Friends of the Wildflower Garden](#)  
[Illinois Wildflowers](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Photo Credit: Susan Nelson

## Planting Recommendations

Sky-blue asters prefer full to partial sun and dry to moderately moist, well-drained soils. Like other asters, this species adds color to fall landscapes and gardens, where its 2- to 4-foot height makes it well-suited for the backs of borders or the centers of island plots. It spreads by seeds and short rhizomes, but is not aggressive. Spread seeds outdoors in late fall or early spring for late spring germination. Seeds do not require pretreatment, so they are also easily germinated indoors in pots or flats. Keep seeds dry and

cool before sowing in dampened seed-starting or potting mix. The small seeds should be barely covered and kept moist with a mister. In a warm environment, seeds germinate within two weeks. Transplant outdoors after the plants are several inches tall, spacing them about 1 foot apart. Sky-blue aster is also propagated by division: In spring, cut the root mass of an established plant with a sharp garden spade and plant the divisions at their original depth. Good companions include showy goldenrod, pale purple coneflower and little bluestem.

Developed by Susan Nelson, botanist and author/curator of [Larkspur Plant Resources](#)



**STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:** None

**ID:** Basal and lower stem leaves are long-stalked with heart- or arrow-shaped bases and blunt to pointed tips. The lance-shaped upper leaves are smaller. All leaves are rough on both sides and toothless. Flowers are a half-inch to three-fourths-inch wide with blue or blue-violet rays and yellow centers that turn red to purple with age.

### SIMILAR SPECIES:

Smooth blue aster (*S. laeve*) has 1-inch-wide violet flowers and smooth, stalkless leaves. Blue wood aster (*S. cordifolium*) leaves are coarsely toothed and more broadly heart shaped.