

Heart-leaved aster (*Symphyotrichum cordifolium*)

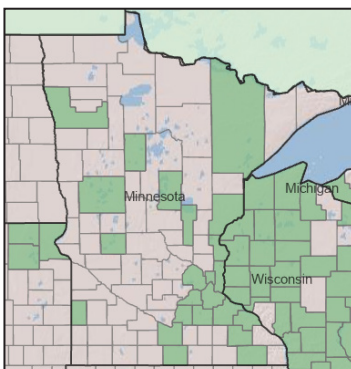
Family: Aster (Asteraceae)

DESCRIPTION: Heart-leaved aster, also known as blue wood aster, is a native perennial with attractive blue-violet flowers that bloom from September to October. It commonly grows in woods, thickets, floodplain forests, wooded bluffs and along streambanks. It grows abundantly in central Minnesota and less commonly in the northeast.

USES: The flowers support a wide diversity of pollinators, including bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, moths and beetles. The plant serves as a host for the **silvery checkerspot caterpillar** (pictured). Its stems provide winter nesting habitat for pollinators. Its late-season blooms offer an important nectar source for pollinators before overwintering.

REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
[Illinois Wildflowers](#)
[Blue Thumb Planting For Clean Water](#)
[Native Plant Network \(USDA NRCS\)](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Planting Recommendations

Heart-leaved asters thrive in medium to medium-dry soils, tolerate drought, and prefer partial shade to partial sun. Plants reproduce through wind-dispersed seed and rhizomes. Mature seeds can be harvested in late fall after they develop fine hairs. While time-consuming, removing the hairs can help with germination. It is best to sow seeds on top of the soil in late fall or early winter, as they need cold, moist stratification to break dormancy and germinate in the spring. To improve establishment

success, consider sowing seeds outdoors in containers over winter and transplanting seedlings in the spring when they are a few inches tall. Keep stored seeds cool (55 degrees) and dry to prevent germination. While plants are becoming established, control weeds to decrease competition, and ensure plants receive 1 inch of water per week. Good companion plants include other shade-tolerant species such as wild ginger, columbine, wild geranium, poke milkweed and lady fern.

Developed by Alexis Lathrop, based at Carlton Soil and Water Conservation District through Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa's Individual Placement program

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**STATEWIDE
WETLAND
INDICATOR
STATUS:** None

ID: The plant produces ray-shaped flowers about a half-inch long, typically with seven to 15 petals in colors ranging from nearly white to pale blue or lavender. Basal leaves are heart-shaped, thin and coarsely toothed with long petioles, while upper leaves are smaller and more lanceolate. Plants can grow up to 3 feet tall. The main stems have occasional hairs, and leaves are attached alternately.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

The flowers of both Drummond's aster (*Symphyotrichum drummondii*) and Lindley's aster (*Symphyotrichum ciliolatum*) are similar in color. Drummond's aster's leaf shape is similar, but its stems and leaves are hairier. Lindley's aster's leaves are narrower with broader-winged leaf stalks.