

Show-stopping fall blooming perennial for sun:

Fall Aster (*Aster oblongifolius*, recently reclassified to *Symphotrichum oblongifolium*)

Description: Fall Aster, also called Aromatic Aster, is native to the midwest and eastern US. It grows 1 to 3 feet tall and branches frequently, creating a bushy appearance. It has slender, stiff stems; the lower stems may become woody and turn brown by the end of the growing season. Fall Aster has alternate lanceolate to oblong leaves that can be up to 2 inches long and half an inch wide. Typically the leaves are larger at the base of the plant becoming smaller further up. Sometimes Fall Aster loses its lower leaves as it grows; this is not a cause for concern. The crushed foliage has a pleasant aroma, explaining the alternate name of Aromatic Aster. In addition to multiplying by seed, Fall Aster sends out underground rhizomes; thus one plant can yield a large clump of Asters 3 feet wide or more.



Photo courtesy of Lon Turnbull

Flowers and Fruit: Fall Aster blooms from September to November in North Texas, putting on a magnificent display after many other perennials have finished blooming. It has daisy-like flowers, 1 to 1¹/₄ inch across. Each compound flower has numerous very small yellow disk florets, surrounded by many lavender-blue ray florets. In ideal conditions, the plant will be covered with blossoms.

Planting sites: Fall Aster does best in full sun and will tolerate partial or dappled sun. It does very well in calcareous or sandy soils; most soils are well tolerated. Fall Aster should have good drainage; avoid planting it in areas where it may experience “wet feet” or it may rot.

Watering Instructions: Like most Texas natives, Fall Aster will need supplemental water during the first growing season; after it is established, it will thrive with existing rainfall. It is very drought tolerant.

Comments: In addition to its high value as an ornamental, Fall Aster is visited by a variety of bees and butterflies that use it as a larval and a nectar source. After the blooming period, the foliage dries out and creates a dense protective cover for over-wintering birds. At the beginning of spring, the dried stems and foliage may be pruned away, revealing rosettes of new growth for the coming year’s growth. Consider using Fall Aster as an alternative to chrysanthemum species.

Look for the NICE! Plant of the Season signs and information sheets on your next visit to a participating North Texas nursery. Thank you for using native plants in your landscapes.

Trinity Forks Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas Meetings are the 4th Thursday in Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Sep & Oct, TWU’s ACT building 6:30 pm, 2nd floor.