



Purple-stemmed Aster (*Symphotrichum puniceum*) - Fantastic Fall Flower



Did you Know?

- Although most Purple-stemmed Asters have distinct purple stems, this is not true of all of them.
- Asters are very challenging to identify and distinguish between, often having very subtle distinguishing features. Further adding the confusion, conflicting common names and frequent species hybridization make the identification of these flowers that much more difficult!
- The Purple-stemmed Aster most closely resembles the New-England Aster.

Photo: milesizz Flickr.com

Habitat - Mainly found in forest wet-lands, including Swamps and wet thickets, as well as open wet areas and sometimes in fields. Mostly they just require a sufficiently wet area with access to plenty of sun.

Flowers - The Purple-stemmed Aster is a perennial and flowers from August through to October.

Status - S5 secure.

Range - found throughout Canada and the greater part of the eastern continental United States.

Also Known As - Glossy-leaved Aster, Swamp Aster



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY



Identification:

The Purple-stemmed aster can grow to a height of up to 120cm. The stem, which is often a reddish purple colour, is the most distinguishing feature of the plant, and is also often crooked. The flower itself, which blooms in the early parts of autumn, is comprised of 7 or more petals of a blue to violet composition. At the center are disc flowers, numbering 30-90, which start as yellow, later become purple. The flowers are roughly 2.5cm in diameter. Its leaves gradually taper to a base that clasps the stem and have a rough texture.

Photo: milesizz Flickr.com



Purple-stemmed Aster on the Niagara Escarpment

The Bruce Trail passes through many wetlands and wet areas as it winds along the Niagara Escarpment. Watch for this distinct fall flower when passing through an area that would be wet enough to support it.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is continually acquiring and protecting land along the Niagara Escarpment, often including land that contains significant wetlands that are perfect habitat for the Purple-stemmed Aster.

Photo: milesizz Flickr.com



Interesting Facts:

Purple-stemmed Asters send up flower stalks only after their second or third years.

This is this widest ranging species in its genus, ranging from eastern Canada and northern Quebec to the Gulf coast of Texas.

Traditional medicinal properties of this plant included treatments for colds, typhoid, pneumonia and fever, as well as for alleviating tooth-aches.