

MISTFLOWER OR WILD AGERATUM
Eupatorium coelestinum L.

Description: Mistflower is an erect (to 3 feet), rhizomatous perennial, often forming colonies. The opposite leaves are ovate, hairy, and have toothed margins. The small flower heads, produced from July to October, are clustered at the top of the plant. They are powder blue to violet and fluffy in appearance, similar to Ageratums used as garden bedding plants. The tiny seed are black, elongated, and have long white hairs attached to one end.

Uses: This plant is used mainly for landscape beautification. It has potential for use in cultivated, garden situations, in naturalized prairie or meadow plantings, and along roadsides.

Site adaptation: Mistflower is adapted to most soil types, but is especially suited to heavy textured and to highly organic soils. Natural stands are found on moist to wet sites, such as low woods, wet meadows, and ditches. It grows best in full sun, but will tolerate light shade.

Cultural Specifications

Method of establishment: Seed or transplanted seedlings.

Planting time: Seed should be planted in the field from September to October. Transplants are usually grown from seed sown in the greenhouse or cold frame in late winter.

Seedbed preparation: A clean, firm seedbed is essential. The site should be treated with a herbicide to control existing vegetation, tilled, cultipacked once or twice, and allowed to settle thoroughly before sowing.

Planting rate and method: Broadcast 0.5-0.75 gram seed per 100 square feet (0.5-0.75 lb/acre). Bulk sowing rates usually need to be increased to allow for low purity values. The seed can be mixed with sand or rice hulls to increase volume so that it will be easier to spread uniformly over the planting site. Seed must remain on the soil surface because they are easily smothered when buried in the soil. The seed will not germinate until the following spring, but will benefit from the cool, moist winter environment.

Greenhouse production: Seed should be sown in flats or pots in a well-drained, sterile growing medium. The seed should be planted on the surface of the medium. Seedlings can be transplanted about 5-8 weeks after sowing. Young plants should be kept constantly moist and weekly applications of a soluble complete fertilizer are recommended. Plant in the field after all danger of frost is past. Prior to planting, seedlings should be hardened-off by placing them outdoors in a shady location for approximately one week.

Fertilizer requirement: Apply according to soil test recommendations. If not available, a rate of 3.5-5.5 oz per 100 square feet (100-150 lb/acre) of 13-13-13 should be applied after the seedlings are established and annually thereafter.

Companion plants: Mistflower can be grown with many grasses and wildflowers that also prefer a moist site. Some suggested companion wildflowers are swamp rose mallow,

scarlet sage, cardinal flower, clasping coneflower, calliopsis, ox-eye daisy, swamp sunflower, meadow beauty, and bur marigold.

Management

Mowing: Stands can be mowed in the spring and early summer. Later mowings should be delayed until the plants have set seed in late October to early November.

Seed production: The seed matures 2-3 weeks after the flowers fade. The flower head will turn gray to brown and the seed will strip easily from the receptacle. Plants generally produce only a small percentage of viable seed; faulty seed will be thin and shriveled. Seed can be collected by hand cutting the clusters from the plant, or mechanically, with a combine or seed stripper. Mechanically harvested seed is difficult to clean because the small size and the attached fluffy hairs make air separation impossible.

Prepared by:
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center
Route 3, Box 215-A
Coffeeville, MS 38922-9263
Telephone (601) 675-2588
FAX (601) 675-2369

April 1997

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.