

## NEW ENGLAND ASTER

*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*

(L.) Nesom

Plant Symbol = SYNO2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



Robert Mohlenbrock  
USDA, NRCS, Wetland Sciences Institute  
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### Alternative Names

*Aster novae-angliae*

### Uses

*Ethnobotanic:* A decoction of the plant has been used in the treatment of weak skin (Moerman 1998). A poultice has been used in the treatment of pain, fevers, and diarrhea.

*Wildlife:* New England aster is known for attracting butterflies and moths to areas where it is found growing. This is a good bee plant providing nectar in the autumn. Most species in this genus seem to be immune to the predations of rabbits (Thomas 1990).

### Status

Please consult the Plants Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

### Description

*General:* Aster family (Asteraceae). New England aster (*Aster novae-angliae*) is a perennial with several

erect stems in clumps, stems 0.8 to 2 meters, densely spreading pubescent, thirty or more nodes below the branches of the inflorescence (Radford, Ahles & Bell 1968). The leaves are lanceolate to elliptic lanceolate, two to nine centimeters long and one to two centimeters wide. The disc flowers are yellow, hermaphrodite (having both male and female organs) and are pollinated by bees, butterflies, flies, beetles and moths.

*Distribution:* *Aster novae-angliae* ranges from Quebec to Alberta, south to North Carolina, Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico (Steyermark 1963). For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

### Adaptation

This plant is commonly found in moist prairies, meadows, roadsides and streams (Dension 1998). It requires well-drained soil and prefers sandy, loamy and clay soils. This species can grow on nutritionally poor soil but prefers rich soil. New England aster grows well in a sunny location and can succeed in partial shade.

### Establishment

*Propagation by Seed:* *Aster novae-angliae* seeds should be sown fresh in the fall or spring (Heuser 1997). Pre-chill spring sown seeds to improve germination (Ibid.). When the seedlings are large enough to handle, place them into individual pots and plant them out in the summer.

Division of this species should be done in the spring or autumn. Large divisions can be planted into their permanent positions whereas smaller clumps should be kept in a cold frame until they are growing well.

### Management

Divisions of *Aster novae-angliae* species should be done in the spring every three years to maintain vigor (Heuser 1997).

### Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Available somewhat through native plant seed sources. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be

listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

### References

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Huxley, A. 1992. *The new RHS dictionary of gardening*. MacMillan Press, New York, New York.

Moerman, D. 1998. *Native American ethnobotany*. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon.

Radford, A.E., H.E. Ahles, & C. Bell 1968. *Manual of the vascular flora of the Carolinas*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

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Strausbaugh, P.D. & E.L. Core 1971. *Flora of West Virginia*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Seneca Books, Inc., Morgantown, West Virginia.

The Great Plains Flora Association 1986. *Flora of the Great Plains*. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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