

Aster novae-anglia (Symphyotrichum n.)
New England Aster



Native to the moist prairies, meadows, thickets, and stream banks of the eastern United States, the New England aster is a robust, upright perennial maturing to 3-6 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide. In late summer into fall, a profusion of 1 ½ inch to 2 inch violet purple ray flowers with yellow centers bloom. Plants will self-sow in favorable conditions.

Hardy to USDA zone 4 (-30 degrees F), the New England aster grows best in moist, rich, well-drained soil in full sun. Plants form large clumps and are best divided every few years by replanting shoots from the outer edges of the clump in spring. New England aster is susceptible to foliar diseases, such as powdery mildew. Maintain good air circulation around plants and cut out stems when plant growth is dense. Additionally, due to its height, this aster should be staked. Stems also can be pinched back until June 1 to make plants more compact. After this date, flower buds set.

The New England aster provides a late season nectar source for insects and many butterfly larvae eat its foliage, including the pearl crescent and checker spot butterflies. Plants also are deer resistant.

Flowers of the New England aster are excellent for cutting and have a good vase life. Use gloves when cutting stems and wear a long sleeve shirt as the hairy stems of this aster can cause a serious skin rash on hands and arms.