

Aster laevis Smooth Aster¹

Edward F. Gilman and David Marshall²

Introduction

Aster laevis is a sturdy branching perennial that reaches a height of 6 to 18 inches. The grey-silver leaves of smooth aster have a fine texture, and light blue daisy-like flowers appear on the plant in the late spring, summer, and fall. The smooth aster is not especially showy but has been proven to be reliable.

General Information

Scientific name: *Aster laevis*

Pronunciation: ASS-ter LEE-viss

Common name(s): smooth aster

Family: Compositaceae

Plant type: herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 4B through 9A (Fig. 1)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: mass planting; edging; attracts butterflies; cut flowers

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: symmetrical habit with a regular (or smooth) outline and individuals having more or less identical forms

Growth rate: fast

Texture: fine

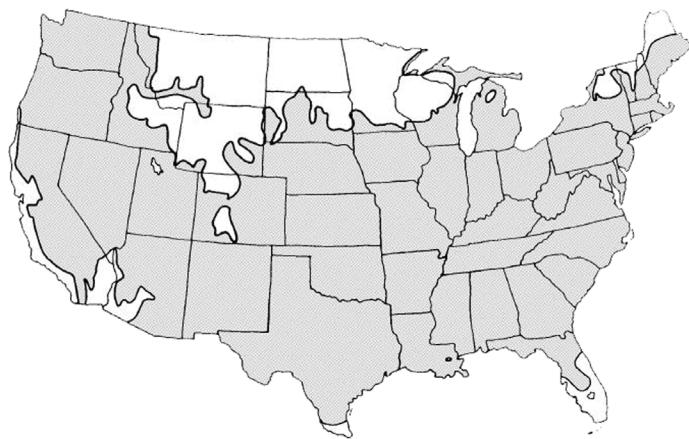


Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

1. This document is FPS55, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

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Flower

Flower color: lavender

Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: white

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The flowers of smooth aster can be cut for flower arrangements, as they last several days indoors. The plant performs well as an edging in the landscape or in a group planting. It makes a nice component in a mixed border.

This perennial requires full sun and a well-drained soil.

Aster laevis is drought tolerant.

Smooth aster is propagated by softwood cuttings or by division.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.