

BWSR Featured Plant

Name: Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

Plant family: Boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)

Right: Boneset grows 2 to 4 feet tall in moist sunny locations such as wetlands.

Below: Opposite, hairy leaves encircle the hairy stem giving the appearance that the stem grows through one large leaf.

Photo Credits:
BWSR



Boneset’s common name may be a historical reference to its use in healing broken bones, or as a treatment for the 18th century break bone fever. Its botanical name, *perfoliatum*, refers to its opposite leaves, which encircle the stem — making it appear as if the stem grows through the leaf.

A late summer to early fall-blooming perennial, boneset grows 2 to 4 feet tall. It prefers moist, sunny areas such as wetlands and along waterways.

Plant Stats

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:

MW: OBW;
NCNE: FACW

PRIMARY USES:

Pollinator food, native and rain garden plantings

Identification

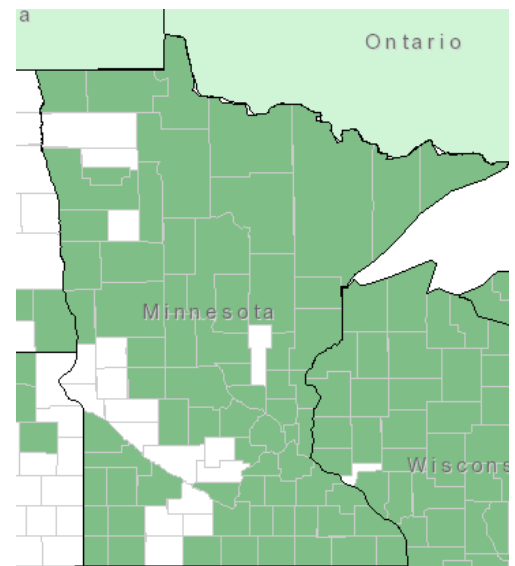
Medium green and hairy, the lance-shaped leaves grow up to 8 inches long and 2 inches wide with small, rounded teeth along the edges. The opposite, wrinkly leaves merge together at the base, making it look as if the stem grows through one large leaf. Tiny flowers appear in fuzzy, flat clusters atop erect, hairy stalks. Dull white and

star-shaped, the quarter-inch-wide flowers have five triangular, petal-like lobes. Spanning 2 to 8 inches wide, flower clusters can contain up to 15 disk flowers. Brown stamens grow in the center of the flowers. White, flattened, string-like styles emerge from them. The fruit is a dry, black seed with a tuft of hair at the end. The plant grows 2 to 4 feet tall.

Range

Boneset is native throughout Minnesota. It grows in a variety of wetland habitats across eastern North America, from Manitoba south to Texas and east into Quebec and Florida.

Range map source:
USDA NRCS Plants Database



Uses

Flowers produce nectar that attracts pollinators including bees, wasps and butterflies. The fragrant, showy flowers are used in fresh or dried arrangements. When planted with wetland grasses and sedges, boneset provides late-summer accents. It helps to control erosion, and is useful in stormwater retention basins and rain gardens. In the past, a tea made from dried plant parts was used to treat a variety of ailments.



Boneset grows in a restored wet meadow.

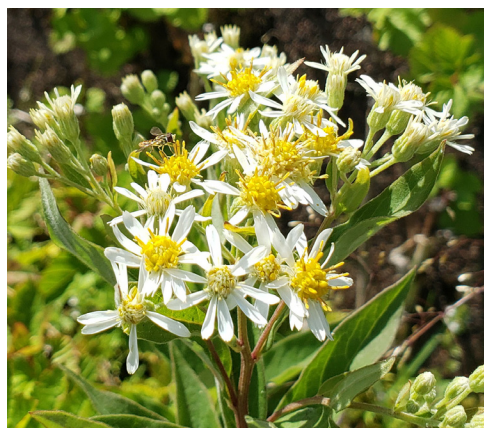
Planting Recommendations

Boneset forms dense colonies when grown in proper soil, light and moisture conditions. It thrives in full to partial sun and moist, organic-rich soils. It is a good choice for rain gardens, wet meadows and wet prairies. Seeds can be sown directly in the garden in the fall; otherwise they should undergo 30 days of cold stratification before planting. Boneset forms underground rhizomes, and also can be propagated by division in spring or fall.

Similar Species

Flowers of different species of *Eupatorium* are similar, but those plants lack leaves that completely encircle the stem. White snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) has similar flowers, but it prefers shade and its leaves are broadly ovate

to heart-shaped, with petioles growing a half-inch to 2.5 inches long. Although flat-topped aster (*Doellingeria umbellata*) leaves are similar, they are alternate, and the florets are rays with yellow center disks.



Leaves of the flat-topped aster are alternate, and flowers are ray with yellow center disks.

References

Illinois Wildflowers: https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/cm_boneset.htm

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=EUPE3

Minnesota Wildflowers: <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/common-boneset>

USDA Plants Database: <https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=EUPE3>

Missouri Botanical Garden: <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=c730>

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