

Silky aster (*Symphyotrichum sericeum*)

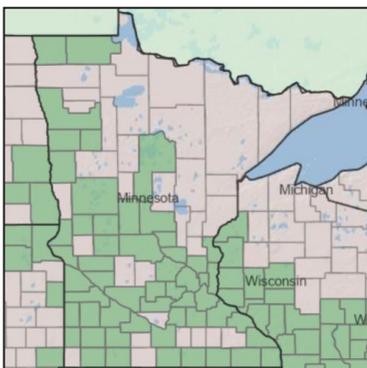
Family: Asteraceae
(Aster)

DESCRIPTION: A native perennial, silky aster is commonly found in prairies, dry open woods and on rocky slopes. Its deep roots help it tolerate drought and stabilize soils. This species responds well to prescribed burns, often growing back with increased vigor.

USES: Silky aster plays a vital ecological role by attracting a variety of pollinators — leafcutter bees, bumblebees, sweat bees, syrphid flies and butterflies, including the **Eastern tailed-blue** (pictured) and the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. Because of its hardiness and aesthetic appeal, it is often used in native prairie restorations, pollinator gardens and erosion control plantings.

REFERENCES:

- [Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
- [U of M Herbarium](#)
- [Illinois Wildflowers](#)
- [Michigan Flora](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Planting Recommendations

Silky aster thrives in full sun and well-drained soils. It is well-suited to upland sites, dry meadows and rock gardens. Seeds can be directly sown in late fall or early spring. Fall seeding is recommended to allow natural cold-moist stratification, which improves germination. Alternatively, refrigerate seeds for 60 to 90 days before sowing in spring. Lightly press seeds into soil without burying them; silky aster needs light to germinate. Seedlings grow slowly; plants

may take up to three years to flower. During early growth, weeding is important to reduce competition for light, water and nutrients. In gardens, consider marking young plants to prevent weeding them accidentally. Once established, this low-maintenance plant is resistant to deer and most pests. Silky aster pairs well with other dry prairie natives, such as blue grama, narrow-leaved purple coneflower, little bluestem and butterfly milkweed.

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: None

ID: The plant grows up to 2 feet tall, with narrow, silvery-green leaves covered in soft, silky hairs. The leaves are tightly clasped to the stems and feel fuzzy to the touch. Its showy purple to lavender, daisylike flowers with pale yellow centers bloom from late summer into fall.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

Aromatic aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*) has rough leaves and much brighter yellow disk flowers. Smooth blue aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*) has smooth, bluish-green, waxy leaves.

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Photo Credits: Marcie O'Connor, [Prairie Haven blog](#)