

ASTER PRODUCTION AND CONSUMER CARE

INTRODUCTION

- Common name: Aster
- Scientific name: *Aster spp.*
- Perennial; various species grow wild in almost any environment
- Name originated from the Greek word for 'star'
- Grows in bushy clumps 1–2" tall
- Produces large clusters of delicate flowers in white, purple, pink, or red; the center of the flower is always yellow
- Blooms from late summer to first frost; adds fall color to a garden
- Though daisy-like in appearance, actually a member of the sunflower family
- Hardy in zones 4–9
- Over 180 species in genus *Aster*

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Prefers moist, well-drained media in full sun; will tolerate partial shade
- Should be watered once or twice a week during dry periods
- Add a general purpose fertilizer once a month
- Plants also benefit from the addition of compost

- Pinch back tops 6–8 inches prior to mid-July to encourage bushy growth and prolong the bloom period
- Should be divided every three to four years

PROPAGATION

- Easily propagated by dividing; place new plants 18 inches apart
- Seeds may be sown indoors at 70° F or sown directly into the garden after danger of frost has passed
- Cover seeds lightly with media and water thoroughly once; germination occurs in 15–30 days
- Growing from seed indoors allows for proper spacing when plants are transplanted to the garden

DISORDERS

- Powdery mildew (*Erysiphe cichoracearum*)
 - Fuzzy white coating forms on leaves
 - Foliage will wilt, brown, and drop
 - Reduce humidity and remove infected foliage
- Bacterial crown gall (*Agrobacterium tumefaciens*)
 - Rough, rounded galls form near soil surface

- Avoid infested soil and remove
- Verticillium wilt
 - Occasionally kills plants
 - Remove infected plants

CONSUMER CARE

- Remove spent flowers to ensure a long blooming season
- Tall varieties benefit from staking
- Sturdy stalks make aster a good candidate for flower arrangements
- Grows well in container gardens for a deck or porch

CULTIVARS AND SPECIES

- *Aster dumosus*: Daisy-like flowers, mildew resistant
 - 'Wood's Blue'
 - 'Wood's Pink'
 - 'Wood's Purple'
- *Aster x frikartii*
 - 'Monch': violet blue daisies
- *Aster novae-angliae*: New England aster

References

- <http://www.thegardenhelper.com/aster.html>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aster_\(flower\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aster_(flower))
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- http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/plants/plantprofile_aster.shtml
- <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/imp/modzz/00000172.html>

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