

## Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*)

### Aster Family

**Other Common Names:** smooth aster

**Scientific Name:** *Symphyotrichum laeve* var. *laeve* (L.) G.L. Nesom    **Plant Symbol:** SYLAL3

**Distinguishing characteristics:** Flowering heads few to many on the ends of ascending branches, rays are blue to lavender and the center is yellow; leaves are widest near the middle and sometimes heart-shaped, generally without hairs; leaf stems absent or very short; basal leaves and those on the lower half of the stem generally absent/withered at flowering.

**Plant Height:** 2-4 ft., erect, branched above the stem's midpoint    **Blooms/Fruits:** August-October

**Duration:** Perennial, herbaceous (from creeping, woody rhizomes)

**Pollinator Value:** Provides nectar and/or pollen to a wide variety of insect taxa including butterflies, beetles, wasps, bumble bees and other native bee species.

**Habitat:** Open or drying sites, upland prairies, open forests, and roadsides.

**Note:** Four varieties have been described to smooth blue aster. Varieties *laeve* and variety *concinnum* occur in the Appalachian region. This variety, *S. l.* var. *laeve* is distinguished from the other 3 varieties by having the phyllary bracts under the inflorescence noticeably unequal and on the tip of each there is a diamond shaped green patch at the tip.

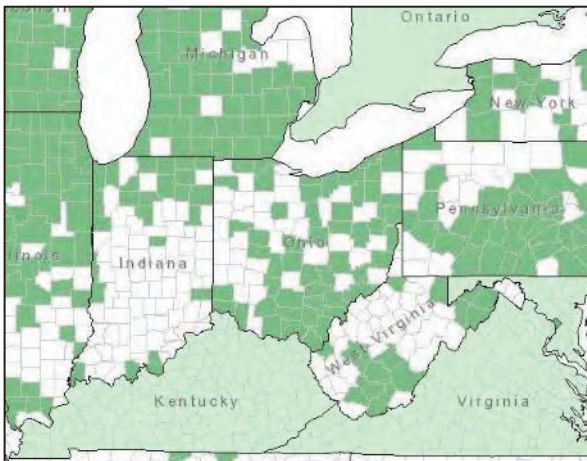






Photo: R.W. Smith, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center © 2009 k. chayka

© 2009 k. chayka

Full flowering/close-up of flowers

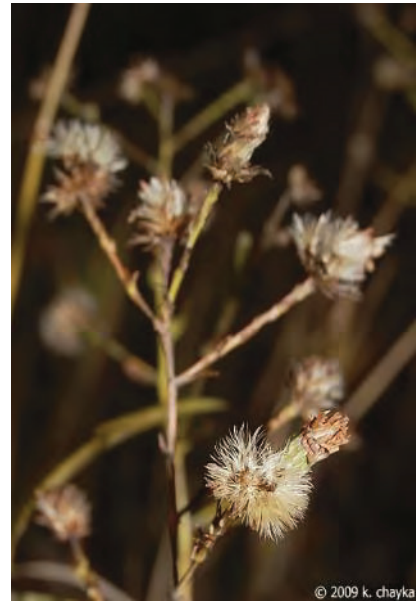


Photo: John Hilty, Illinois Wildflower



Photo: © 2007 K. Chayka

Stem and leaf arrangement



© 2009 k. chayka

Mature plant