

Calico Aster – *Symphotrichum lateriflorum*



Photo: Richard Stromberg



Photo: Isaac Matlock



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Habitat Notes:

Ubiquitous in mesic to dry upland forests, woodlands, swamps, wet flatwoods, clearings, old fields, meadows, and other disturbed habitats.

Species Identification:

- Ray florets white or, rarely, pink; Disk florets purplish or yellow or red; tubes goblet shaped.
- Height 1-4 feet
- Stem slightly arching, villous or densely pilose to glabrous, purplish to green.
- Leaves basal and cauline; basal 8 x 4cm, elliptic to obovate or subrotund, serrate or entire; cauline leaves 1.8-15 x 0.3-3 cm, those of the branches often abruptly reduced, linear-lanceolate to subrhombic, tapering from middle to the tip and base, serrate or dentate to entire, scabrous or glabrous above, glabrous beneath, with the midrib usually villous or pilose.
- Phyllaries < 1mm wide, in 3 or 4 series, firm, linear-oblong with spatulate midrib, acute to obtuse, ciliate or eciliate, glabrous.
- Cypselae sparsely strigose.

Cultural Conditions:

- Full sun to partial shade (6 hours of sun at least)
- Clay soil, high organic matter, loam
- Good drainage, moist, occasionally dry

Ecological Benefits:

- Wildlife: Attracts a variety of pollinator species and is bountiful food source for many species.
- Birds eat the seeds and herbivorous mammals browse on the foliage.

Growing Protocol:

- Seed requires no stratification (A)

Collection Information:

- Fluffy seeds. Tugging the pappus can aid in knowing when to harvest. If the stem is still green and the seeds refuse to release with the pappus, its too early.
- Collect when stem is dark and pappus full and easy to pull.
- Shaking stem in bag can be an efficient way to collect many seeds.

Pests & Disease:

- No serious insect or disease problems. Observe for verticillium wilt, powdery mildew, and gray molds.