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# planting and care of Silver-leaved Aster in landscapes

Photo by Nancy Bissett

## About this species

Silver-leaved Aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia*) also known as Grass-leaved Goldenaster or Narrowleaf Silkgrass, is found throughout Florida in scrub, sandhills and flatwoods ecosystems.

The species has five varieties, two or more of which may be found in native nurseries. *Pityopsis graminifolia* var. *tracyi*, or Tracy's Silver-leaved Aster, can be found in all of the habitats, though mostly in flatwoods. *P. graminifolia* var. *aequifolia*, or Sandhill Silver-leaved Aster, is usually only found on drier soils of sandhills and scrub. It blooms later than most other fall wildflowers, providing color into late fall and early winter. Tracy's Silver-leaved Aster also makes a short silvery groundcover and can often be seen mown on upper slopes of many roadsides.

## Description

Silver-leaved Aster is a fitting name, as the leaves are covered with silky hairs that give it a silvery look. At first glance, the plant may appear to be a grass. It is a perennial with short or long rhizomes, depending on the variety, and is less than a foot tall until the fall, when it sends up bloom stalks on stems up to 3 feet tall. Its yellow aster-like flowers can bloom into November and December, and even later farther south.

Tracy's Silver-leaved Aster spreads from rhizomes to make a dense groundcover and has flowers over 1 inch across on the tips of branched stems with short, appressed leaves. This variety, with its ability to spread, can make a very pleasing silvery grass-like groundcover over time. Sandhill Silver-leaved Aster grows as a single clump with smaller flowers on the tips of stems that have longer spreading leaves all the way to the top. It can be mixed with other wildflowers that offer a variety of color and bloom times.



Photo by Mary Keim



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

*Pityopsis graminifolia*



Photo by Nancy Bissett

*Pityopsis graminifolia* var. *tracyi*

Silver-leaved aster attracts butterflies and various pollinators as a nectar plant.



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## Planting

Silver-leaved Aster is relatively easy to establish and maintain over time, especially if it is one of the spreading varieties. The more rhizomatous varieties can also be divided and planted in new areas.

## Seeds

Though some varieties will spread, *Pityopsis* do not reseed as readily as do wildflowers such as *Coreopsis* and Blanketflower. Collect the seed heads once the head has completed flowering and the seed has fluffed out. Seeds may need to be sown rather soon in the winter months, because they aren't viable for long.

## Plants

Plants are generally available in quarts or gallons from native nurseries. Space them 2 feet apart — closer if using Tracy's Silver-leaved Aster to create a groundcover quickly by spreading. Plants can be established at any time of the year from containers by watering in well after planting and following with water as needed until established or well into the rainy season.

## Care

After the plants have bloomed, cut back the flowering stems to ground level. You can even mow in areas where Tracy's Silver-leaved Aster has been used to make a spreading groundcover. Use well-sharpened blades, as the stems and leaves are quite tough.

## Site Conditions

The plant prefers full sun to light shade and well-drained soils to droughty sandy soils. Avoid heavily shaded or crowded plantings. Different varieties may require different growing conditions; ask about the plant's origins.



*Pityopsis graminifolia*

Photo by Eleanor Dietrich



*Pityopsis aspera*

Photo by John Moran



*Pityopsis graminifolia*

Photo by Peg Urban



*Pityopsis graminifolia*

Photo by Christina Evans

The different varieties of Silver-leaved Aster are not well known, even by native growers, so ask about the growth characteristics when you purchase plants or obtain plant material from a friend.

