Climbing aster is a sprawling vine-like shrub that occurs naturally in coastal hammocks and wet flatwoods, and along the edges of swamps, springs and streams. As a late fall- and winter-flowering species, it helps extend the options for nectar and pollen available to pollinators. It is one of the few wildflowers that will bloom in December. Flowers draw a myriad of native bees, including polyester, sweat, cuckoo, leafcutter, mining, bumble and chimney bees. Butterflies and moths also love them: Monarchs, Pearl crescents, skippers, fritillaries, Common buckeyes, Gray hairstreaks, swallowtails and sulphurs have been known to frequent the flowers for nectar.

The compound flowers have dense centers of yellow-orange disk florets surrounded by many ray florets that vary in color from lavender to purplish-pink to violet. Flowers are 1 to 2 inches in diameter and have a very sweet fragrance. Leaves are grayish-green and elliptic to ovate with entire margins and are born alternately on branches. The seed is an achene with a fluffy pappus.

**Family**: Asteraceae (Aster, daisy or composite family)

**Native range**: Throughout Florida

*To see where natural populations of Climbing aster have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.*

**Hardiness**: Zones 8A–11

**Soil**: Moderately dry to moist sandy, loamy or organic soils

**Exposure**: Full sun to partial shade

**Growth habit**: 8’+ long if climbing; 5’ tall and wide if self-standing

**Propagation**: Seed

**Garden tips**: The sprawling nature of Climbing aster makes it suitable for growing along a trellis or fence. It can also be placed on slopes near the edges of ponds, lakes or streams or at the bases of wetland trees. Though a wetland species, it does well with less soil moisture and can even be used as a standalone shrub. In formal landscapes, it can take on a tangled or chaotic appearance; however, it can be pruned to any shape.

Climbing aster is often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.