

# Walter's aster

(*Symphyotrichum walteri*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Walter's aster is an herbaceous perennial wildflower found in sandhills and pine flatwoods. It blooms in late fall and early winter, providing nectar and pollen to butterflies, bees and other pollinators at a time when floral resources are limited.

The compound flowers of Walter's aster consist of many lavender ray florets surrounding a center of yellow to reddish disk florets. The base of the flowerhead is cupped in green, sepal-like bracts. Stem leaves are small, linear to hastate, and sessile, with acute tips and entire margins. Leaves often curve away from the stem. Leaf arrangement is generally alternate but may be somewhat spiraled. Stems are rough, branched and may be decumbent or erect. Fruits are specialized achenes called cypselae.

Members of the *Symphyotrichum* genus were once classified in the genus *Aster*. The genus name *Symphyotrichum* is from the Greek *symphysis*, meaning "growing together," and *thrix*, or "hair." It refers to a basal ring of hairs or bristles (pappi) thought to occur on New England aster (*Aster novi-belgii*, now *Symphyotrichum novi-belgii*); however, this characteristic is absent in most modern *Symphyotrichum* species. The original *Aster* genus contained over 600 species; all have since been reclassified into 10 different genera.

The species epithet *walteri* is an homage to British botanist Thomas Walter (c. 1740–1789), author of *Flora Caroliniana*, the first North American flora resource to utilize the Linnean binomial taxonomic naming system.

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

**Native range:** Scattered throughout many Central and North Florida counties

To see where natural populations of Walter's aster have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 8A–9B

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Dry to moist, well-drained sandy soils

**Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade

**Growth habit:** Up to 2' tall

**Propagation:** Seed, division

**Garden tips:** Walter's aster is adaptable to a variety of conditions and easy to maintain once established. It is best suited for wildflower and pollinator gardens.

Walter's aster is occasionally available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.



Photo by Mary Keim