

# Climbing aster

(*Ampelaster carolinianus*)

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

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.



Photo by Mary Keim

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.

Climbing aster was previously named *Symphotrichum carolinianum* and may still be listed as such in many print and online resources.

**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](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**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

**Florida regions of landscape suitability:** North, Central, South

**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 [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.

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