

Rice button aster

(*Symphyotrichum dumosum*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Also known as Bushy aster, Rice button aster is a perennial herbaceous wildflower. Like other *Symphyotrichum* species, it is a profuse bloomer. Its flowers are small (3/8- to 3/4-inch in diameter) and borne in terminal panicles. Ray florets vary in color from white to pink to lavender. Disk florets are yellow to reddish and may fade as the flower ages. Bracts are smooth and whitish. Leaves are linear, sessile and alternately arranged. Stems are slim and branched.



Photo by Mary Keim

Rice button aster occurs naturally in sandhills, pine flatwoods and hammocks. It blooms primarily in September through December, although it has been known to bloom throughout the year. Rice button aster attracts many pollinators, particularly butterflies and native bees. The plant is a larval host for the Pearl crescent butterfly.

Members of the *Symphyotrichum* genus were once classified in the genus *Aster*, which contained over 600 species. All have since been reclassified into 10 different genera. The genus name *Symphyotrichum* is from the Greek *sýmphysis*, 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.

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, daisy or composite family)

Native range: Throughout Florida

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

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moderately moist to dry sandy acidic soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 2–3+’ tall

Propagation: Seed

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North, Central, South

Garden tips: Rice button aster is easy to propagate and adaptable to a variety of growing conditions, making it an ideal plant for the home landscape. It does best in mixed wildflower plantings. Rice button aster spreads by suckering and may require some thinning to keep it under control.

Rice button aster is occasionally available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.

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