



**Natural Heritage  
& Endangered Species  
Program**

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*Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife*

**Eastern Silvery Aster  
*Symphotrichum concolor*  
L.**

State Status: **Endangered**  
Federal Status: **None**

**DESCRIPTION:** Eastern Silvery Aster is a slender, lilac-flowered perennial in the Aster family (Compositae or Asteraceae). It grows from about 3 to 10 dm (0.75 to 3.5 ft.) in height. Its stems are simple or sparingly branched and rise either singly or in small groups from a frequently thickened root crown. The rather densely arranged leaves are stalkless, smooth-margined, oblong or lanceolate, and slightly clasping at the base. They measure up to 1.5 cm (0.6 in.) wide by 5 cm (2 in.) long; however, toward the top of the stem, they become gradually smaller. Eastern Silvery Aster's common name comes from the pale coating of silky hairs on both sides of the leaves. The achenes (dry, one-seeded fruits) are silky, as well. The flower heads occur in narrow racemes (elongate, unbranched inflorescences of stalked flowers) or, occasionally, in panicles (branched racemes). Each head has 8-16 showy lilac rays. Eastern Silvery Aster blooms from September to early October.

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** The Showy Aster (*Eurybia spectabilis*) occupies similar habitats (e.g., sites on dry, sandy soil in open woodlands) and is somewhat similar in appearance to the Eastern Silvery Aster. However, its

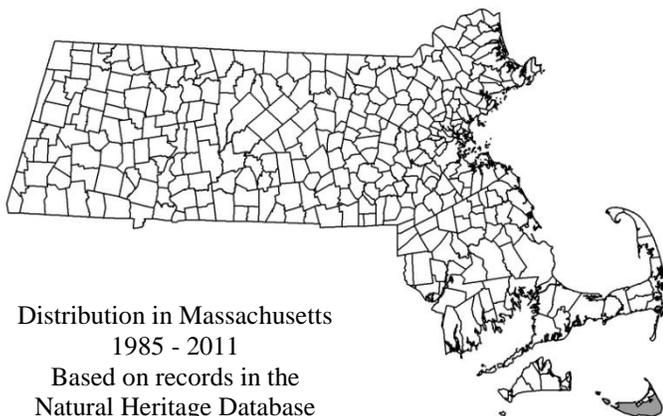


USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 3: 423.

basal leaves have long stalks, while the leaves of Eastern Silvery Aster are stalkless. Furthermore, Showy Aster's flowers are bright violet-purple. Eastern Silvery Aster's lilac-colored flowers make it unique among the asters in our area.

**RANGE:** The documented range of Eastern Silvery Aster encompasses the coastal states, from Massachusetts south to Florida and Louisiana and west to southwestern Texas. Eastern Silvery Aster may also grow in the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee.

**HABITAT:** In general, Eastern Silvery Aster occurs on dry, sandy soil in open woods and barrens. In Massachusetts, it is usually found on dry open sandplains or "moors," occasionally among pine trees. (The plant was once common on the moors of Nantucket)



Distribution in Massachusetts  
1985 - 2011  
Based on records in the  
Natural Heritage Database

**A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan**

**Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife**

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Please allow the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to continue to conserve the biodiversity of Massachusetts with a contribution for 'endangered wildlife conservation' on your state income tax form, as these donations comprise a significant portion of our operating budget.

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and Martha's Vineyard.) Associated species include Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), Bushy Aster (*Symphotrichum dumosum*), Bayberry (*Morella* [= *Myrica*] *pensylvanica*), Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), and Late Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). Rare and uncommon Massachusetts plants that have been found with Silvery Eastern Aster include Sandplain Flax (*Linum intercursum*), Bushy Rockrose (*Helianthemum dumosum*), Sandplain Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium fuscatum*, Special Concern), Purple Cudweed (*Gamochaeta purpurea*, Endangered), New England Blazing Star (*Liatris novae-angliae*, Special Concern), and Nantucket Shadbush (*Amelanchier nantucketensis*).

#### **POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:**

Eastern Silvery Aster is currently listed as Endangered in Massachusetts. In 2011, there were five current populations in the state. Reasons for the plant's rarity in the state include loss of habitat due to encroachment by Scrub Oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*) and by pine-oak forest; in part, this loss is due to excessive fire exclusion and lack of disturbance. In addition, Massachusetts is at the northern edge of the plant's range. Eastern Silvery Aster is also considered rare in New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and Kentucky. It was present historically in Rhode Island and Delaware.

Updated 2015

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