

Smooth blue aster

Symphotrichum laeve (L.) A.&D. Löve var. *laeve* formerly *Aster laevis* L.

Group: Dicot

Family: Asteraceae (aster)

Growth Habit: Forb/herb

Duration: Perennial

U.S. Nativity: Native

Natural Enemies Attracted: Large numbers of *Orius insidiosus*, medium numbers of *Chalcidoidea* and small numbers of *Nabidae*, *Empididae*, *Salticidae*, *Ichneumonidae*, *Thomisidae*, *Coccinellidae* and *Braconidae*.

Pests Attracted: Large numbers of lygus bugs. Small numbers of leafhoppers and leaf beetles.

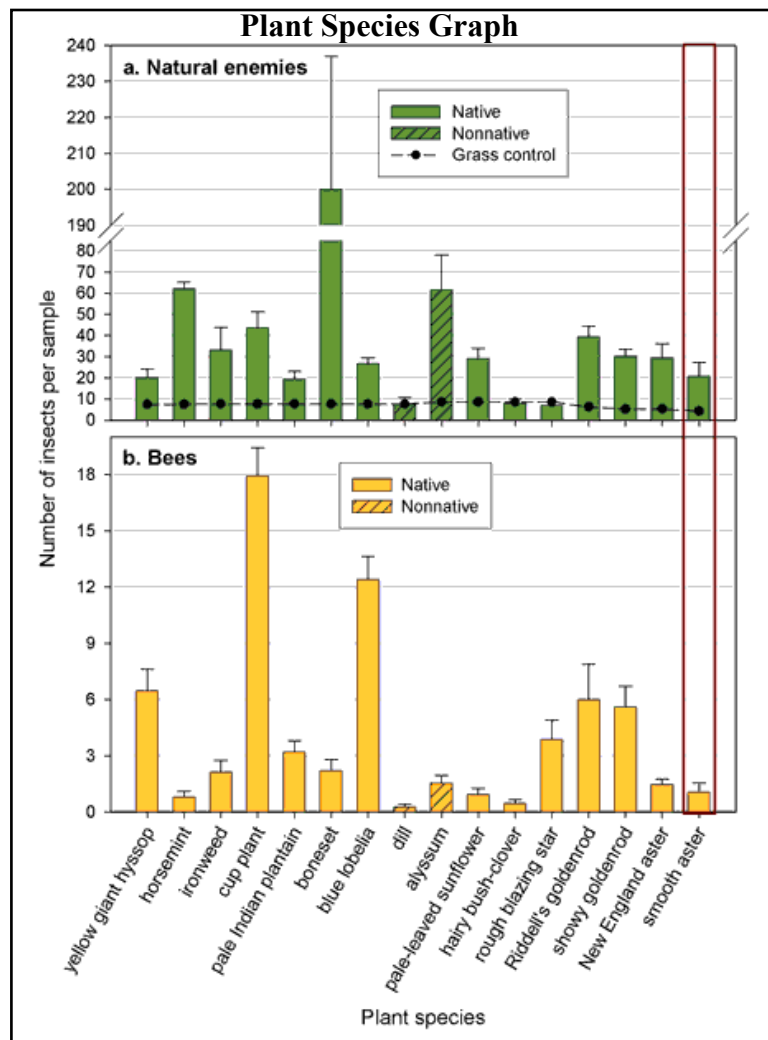
Bees attracted: Moderate numbers (between 1-5 bees per meter square in a 30 second sample) of bees including sweat bees and bumble bees.



Species Notes: Pale violet flowers less than an inch across bloomed on plants that grew 2-4 ft tall. This species filled in fairly well in the second season of growth. Plants bloomed from mid-September to early October. This was one of the less attractive late season plants to natural enemies in the late season, but attracted three times more natural enemies than the grass control.

About the Plant Species Graph:

Average number of beneficial insects collected at each plant species the week before, during, and after peak bloom, for plant species blooming from mid-August through early October (+ standard error). Smooth aster (*Aster laevis*) boxed in red. Bars for natural enemies are in green, bars for bees are in yellow. Bars for native plants are solid and nonnative plants are striped. The black line on the top graph shows the number of natural enemies in grass with no flowering plants (grass control). Plants are listed in order of peak bloom.



Habitat: Full sun to partial shade, and dry to fairly wet locations. Naturally occurring in dry open thickets and woods, especially at clearings and borders, in fields and roadsides, prairies, meadows, and shores. This plant is rarely found in wet places such as fens.

Cultivation and Management: Can be grown from seed (flowers in second or third year) or plug material (flowers in first or second year). We saw no evidence of deer or other vertebrate browsing on this species. Smooth aster was the latest blooming plant species of the 43 natives we tested.

Availability: Species is available as seed, plug or container grown material from various native plant nurseries. See the Michigan Native Plant Producers Association.

For more information: View the online USDA-NRCS PLANTS database.

