

Showy Aster

(Aster conspicuus)



Showy aster has pretty violet flowers, borne at the tips of the stems. The leaves are egg-shaped, have saw-toothed edges, and are arranged alternately on the stem (1/4 x).

Where does it grow? Mainly on the east side of the Cascade Mountains in open timber, parks, and the old burn areas. Associate this plant with lodgepole and Ponderosa pine trees. They seem to like the same growing conditions.

Is it important? It is fairly good sheep and cattle forage. Since it has a long growing season, it also makes good spring, fall, and winter feed for elk.

What does it look like? It is a showy plant with yellow and violet daisy-like blossoms, big egg-shaped leaves, and a twisted, branched stem.

Description:

Roots -- heavy underground creeping rootstalks.

Stems -- grow upright, twist where the leaves attach with branches near the top where flowers are found.

Leaves -- are large, up to 2 1/2 inches wide and 7 inches long, egg-shaped with sharp, saw-toothed edges. They have no stalk and are attached directly to the stem and sometimes clasp around the stem.

Flowers -- asters belong to the composite family, along with sunflower, French pink, chrysanthemum, rabbitbrush, thistle, cosmos, dahlia, erigeron, senecio, dandelion, wyethia, and many other plants, tame and wild. The so-called "flower" of composites is really a collection of dozens and dozens of tiny flowers. Those in the center are called disc flowers and those around the outside are ray flowers. The disc flowers bear seeds and the ray flowers are generally only for show to attract insects. The central disc flowers are yellow and the ray

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flowers violet. Ray flowers are about 1/2 inch long and fastened in a circle. Note the shingle arrangement of the bracts.

Seeds -- are long, flattened, and hairy. Fine bristles are attached to the seed tip, and act as parachutes when wind blows the seed across the country.

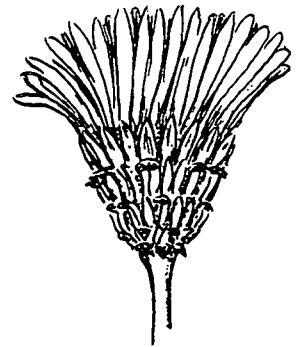
Length of life -- perennial.

Method of spread -- seeds and underground rootstalks.

Growth period -- mid-spring. Blooms from mid-July through September when most other plants are not in bloom.

Other names: Purple aster, Aster.

Does it look like anything else? This aster looks like most other asters. The asters all have about the same flower color and arrangement, but the leaf size and shape help identify Showy Aster. Most of the asters strongly resemble daisies. The asters, though, have wide leaves running up the flower stem clear to the flower, whereas the daisies have slender stems with no leaves on them.



Bracts below the petals are shingled up from the flower stem (1 1/3 x).