

aster miner bee
(*Andrena asteroides*) x 3

Bushy Aster

Symphotrichum dumosum

Family: Asteraceae **Genus:** *Symphotrichum* **Species:** *dumosum*

Average Height: 36 inches **Bloom Time:** Late August - October

Elevation Range: All elevations of the Piedmont. Infrequent in the mountains and mostly at lower elevations. **Geologic/Soil Associations:** A generalist, occurring over various substrates; fond of mineral-rich clayey soils.

Soil Drainage Class and Moisture Regime: poorly-drained to well-drained: Somewhat xeric to sub-hygric (wet for a significant part of growing season).

Light and Aspect: Full sun to part sun. Flat, East, South, and West.

Habitat Associations: In various dry, alternately wet and dry, and seasonally wet grassland habitats, including ash-hickory woodlands, mafic barrens, wet prairies, hardpan forests, old fields, roadside ditches and banks, powerline rights-of-way, and swamp/marsh margins.

Flora Associations: This plant grows in a wide variety of grassland habitats scattered throughout the Piedmont. It is often observed growing with calico aster (*S. lateriflorum*) and frost aster (*S. pilosum*), as well as wet prairie species such as wrinkle-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*).

At Preddy Creek Park in Albemarle County, VA, one will find it growing in a hilltop prairie with pasture thistle (*Cirsium pumilum*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and an extraordinary variety of goldenrods (*Solidago spp.*), thoroughworts (*Eupatorium spp.*), trefoils (*Desmodium spp.*), and bush clovers (*Lespedeza spp.*).

The ultramafic woodlands at The Quarry Gardens at Schyuler, VA, is another place the plant may be observed. Here it grows with post oak (*Quercus stellata*), eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis var. canadensis*), black haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*), curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*), eastern needlegrass (*Piptochaetium avenaceum*), and little-headed nutrush (*Scleria oligantha*).

Fauna Associations: The nectar and pollen of the flowerheads support an unbelievable amount of insects, including bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, and beetles. One bee, *Andrena asteroides*, is a late season aster specialist. Asters are an important source of late-season sustenance. Other insects and herbivores feed on the foliage, suck plant juices, bore through the stalks and roots, or eat the flowerheads and developing seeds. Along with several other *Symphotrichum spp.*, bushy aster serves a larval host plant for the pearl crescent (*Phyciodes tharos*).

Wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) is known to feed on aster leaves and seed heads, and build nests in the habitat.

The bushy thicket these asters help create in grasslands provides great shelter for other nesting birds like common yellowthroat, indigo bunting, blue grosbeak, and meadowlark.



Ray florets are pale lavender or bluish (sometimes white) 6-15 mm.

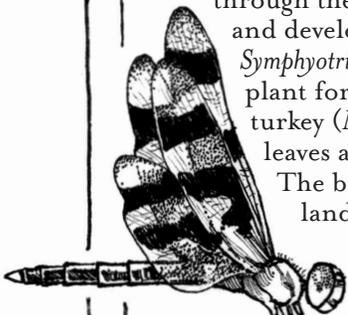


pearl crescent butterfly
(*Phyciodes tharos*) x 1

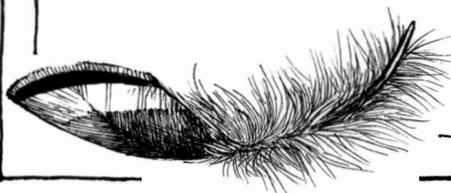
two-spotted bumblebee
(*Bombus bimaculatus*) x 1

common yellowthroat
(*Geothlypis trichas*) x 0.75

Average distance between stem leaves is greater than 3.5 cm.



Halloween pennant dragonfly
(*Celithemis opomna*) x 1



Stem leaves are not clasping, less than 10 mm wide.