

Creating Color in the Fall Landscape - Aster

Late summer and fall can be a dreary time in the landscape, with little else but coreopsis and Black-eyed Susan blooming. Asters are an excellent plant to add to your landscape for additional fall color. Two species of aster, which are both improvements on native wildflowers, are *Aster novae-angliae* and *Aster novi-belgii* or New England and New York Aster, respectively. Both of these species of aster are native to the United States, but many of the improved varieties have been developed in England and Germany.



Both New England and New York aster have 4-5" long leaves, the bases of the leaves clasping the stem from which they originate. New England aster has very hairy leaves, while New York aster has smooth, hairless leaves. The small daisy-like flowers are produced in clusters and range in color from white to pink and blue. Some varieties become very tall, over 4 feet, and will require staking. To avoid this, choose dwarf varieties and pinch the plants back 2 or 3 times before July 4th. This will keep the plants shorter and bushier. Full sun, well drained soil and good air circulation are important when growing asters, since powdery mildew and rust can be a problem on susceptible cultivars.

A few New England Aster cultivars worth trying include:

- **'Fanny's Aster'** has blue flowers and grows to 4 feet.
- **'Harrington's Pink'** has salmon-pink flowers and grows 3-4 feet tall.
- **'Hella Lacy'** has 2" wide, violet-blue flowers and grows to 3-4 feet tall.
- **'September Ruby'** has 1" wide deep ruby red flowers and grows 3-5 feet tall.
- **'Wedding Lace'** has clean, white flowers and grows 3-4 feet tall.
- **'Purple Dome'** has deep, purple flowers on compact 18-24 inch plants.
- **'Alma Potschke'** has bright rose-colored flowers on 3-4 foot plants.

Some dwarf New York Aster cultivars worth trying include:

- **'Alert'** has double, crimson red flowers and grows 10-12 inches tall.
- **'Heinz Richard'** has semi-double salmon-pink flowers and grows 12" tall.
- **'Lady-in-Blue'** has blue flowers and grows 12 inches tall.
- **'Prof. Kippenburg'** has lavender-blue, semi-double flowers and grows 9-12 inches tall.
- **'Snow Cushion'** has white flowers, produces late in the fall and grows 6-8 inches tall.
- **'Wood's Purple'** has purple-blue flowers on 8-12 inch plants.

Many additional cultivars, dwarf and full size, are available for both New York and New England aster.

