

Andy's Garden

Guide to Asters

Asters are the perfect companion plant to Chrysanthemums due to the late season blooming time. Like mums, asters bloom late summer to late fall and can handle a light frost and keep blooming. Planting Asters to take over where annuals leave off, can keep the landscape in beautiful color for several more weeks.

Asters have similar cultural requirements as mums. They too can fail to come back the following spring, if they are planted too late in the landscape and did not have adequate time to get established before winter. Asters have a shallow root system like mums, and need at least 6 weeks of grow time before winter, so the roots grow into the surrounding soil and have a better chance of survival.



Planting Asters (*Aster novi-belgii*)

Planting asters as perennials in spring or fall, will need to be planted in full sun to partial shade (4-6 hours of sun per day) with fertile, well-drained soil. The planting site should be open and airy to provide good air circulation to avoid issues with foliage diseases like powdery mildew, a problem that can plague asters.

Asters appreciate frequent watering especially during hot dry spells. Keep the soil moist, but not standing water. Hand water below the foliage if possible, this helps control disease problems by keeping the foliage dry. A fertilizer with a high middle number for phosphorus can be used at planting time to help stimulate root growth. Once they are established in the new planting site, hand watering can be reduced.

Allow aster foliage to remain on the plants through winter. This will help protect the plants and help them survive the winter months. The seeds in the spent flower heads can also be a food source for birds that stay north for the winter. After a hard frost, apply mulch around the base of the aster plant as an added layer of protection. The mulch can be straw, evergreen clippings or hardwood mulch.

In spring, after the danger of heavy frost or freezing temperatures are over, remove the added layer of mulch from the top of the asters so the new growth can begin to grow. Clip off the old stems.

Although asters (*Aster novi-belgii*) are considered hardy, winter survival is not guaranteed. Using asters like mums as annuals for fall coloring is a good option too!

Quick Tips:

- Give full sun to partial shade location
- Space adequately to give good air flow between plants to discourage mildew
- Keep well-watered to avoid lower leaves from drying out and causing unattractive plants