

Symphotrichum oblongifolium 'October Skies' October Skies Aromatic Aster

Symphotrichum oblongifolium 'October Skies' (October Skies Aromatic Aster) is a bushy, low-growing native plant that creates dazzling lavender-blue mounds in the fall. At 1-2 feet tall and 2-2.5' wide, its compact form makes it great for a mass planting along a pathway edge, or as groundcover. The stiff stems will branch out slowly in the spring to create a bush-like appearance, full of fine-textured foliage that is fragrant when crushed. One of the last Aster species to bloom in the fall, this cultivar extends the garden bloom season into October. Flowers attract a variety of pollinators, including migrating butterflies such as the Monarch Butterfly, which depends on late fall nectar. The flowers turn reddish-purple as they mature. The tan seed heads provide significant winter interest and serve as a food source for birds. Plant October Skies Aromatic Aster in full sun and well-drained dry to moist soils for best performance. Once established, plants are drought, salt, and heat tolerant, making this plant a good option for urban landscapes.

Botanical Name: *Symphotrichum oblongifolium* 'October Skies'

Common Name: October Skies Aromatic Aster

Family: Asteraceae

Nativity: Great Lakes Native

USDA Zone: 3 to 8

Light Type: Full Sun, will tolerate light shade

Soil Type: Sand, Loam, Clay

Soil Preferences: well-drained loam

Soil Moisture: Dry to Moist

Typical height (ft): 1.5-2'

Typical width (ft): 2-2.5'

Foliage: Green to gray-green, fine-textured, lightly fragrant

Bloom Time: September, October

Bloom: Lavender-blue

Ecological features: Floral resources attract a variety of bees, butterflies, and other pollinators; larval host plant for Silvery Checkerspot butterflies

Tolerance of: Drought, Salt, Heat

Additional notes: Bushy aster cultivar with profuse blooms; name comes from herbal, minty fragrance of crushed foliage

Companion plants: Sweet Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*), Fireworks Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks'), Narrow Leaf Bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*), Sideoats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), Coneflowers (*Echinacea* spp.), short ornamental grasses.

For more information see:

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b851>

<http://www.newmoonnursery.com/plant/Aster-oblongifolius-October-Skies>

<https://www.luriegarden.org/plants/aster/>

<https://www.bluestoneperennials.com/ASOS.html>

<https://www.midwestgroundcovers.com/plant/Symphotrichum-oblongifolium-October-Skies>

Images of *Symphotrichum oblongifolium* 'October Skies'



october-skies-detail-Lurie-Garden-9.2016.png

Flower close-up



RCM_IMG3125.jpg
Flowering form



HRN_IMG0005.jpg
close-up of spring leaves



74323.jpg
bushy, spreading form



Fall-Garden-27245.jpg
In garden context

Image choices for narrative:

october-skies-detail-Lurie-Garden-9.2016.png – flower close-up
RCM_IMG3125.jpg – flowering form