

Flaxleaf aster

(*Ionactis linariifolia*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Flaxleaf aster is a petite perennial wildflower that occurs in the sandhill and pine flatwoods communities of Florida's Panhandle. It blooms primarily in October and November, but may bloom as early as September. The flowers attract a variety of pollinators, particularly bees and butterflies.

Flaxleaf aster's small (about 1 inch in diameter), compound flowers are born in clusters atop thin, rigid stems that branch out from a single base. Each flower consists of many lavender to whitish-purple ray florets arranged around a center of yellow to reddish-orange disk florets. Leaves are relatively long (1–1½ inches), stiff and needle-like. Leaf arrangement may be alternate or whorled.

The genus name *Ionactus* is from the Greek *iódis*, meaning "violet," referring to the bloom color. The species epithet *linariifolia* is from the Latin *linearis*, or "linear," and *folium*, meaning "leaves." Flaxleaf aster was originally classified by Carolus Linnaeus as *Aster linariifolius*, but was later moved to its own genus.

Family: Asteraceae (Aster, composite or daisy family)

Native range: Panhandle, from Wakulla County west, and Nassau County

To see where natural populations of Flaxleaf aster have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–9B

Soil: Dry to moist, well-drained sandy soils

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: < 2' tall

Flaxleaf aster may occasionally be available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.



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