

Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster

Symphotrichum laurentianum

STATUS	Endangered 	Not Listed 
Threatened 	Not Listed 	Not Listed 



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Endemic to the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence; currently known from 14 sites along the coast in eastern New Brunswick and northern PEI.



Habitat

Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster lives in coastal habitat like beaches, behind dunes, and higher, dryer parts of salt marshes. Its preferred substrate is moist, sandy soil where flooding only occasionally occurs. It grows in open, slightly sloping ground and tends to occupy a narrow band between frequently flooded areas below and more vegetated areas above.

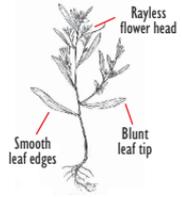


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Species Description

Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster is a small (up to 30 cm tall) annual herb. Its fleshy leaves (15-65 mm long, 1-10 mm wide) are oval- to lance-shaped with a blunt, stiff tip. Its leaf edges have no minute hairs and usually no teeth. Its small flower heads are 0.5-1.4 cm wide and have no ray florets (petals). The small, button-shaped set of disk florets are whitish or pinkish.



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Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster is found along the coast near Miscou Island, Tracadie-Sheila, Kouchibouguac, PEI National Park, and Tignish. Look for small, rayless asters flowering in late August and early September.

Interesting Points

- The Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster is found in New Brunswick, PEI, Magdalen Islands and nowhere else on earth!
- Due to its dynamic habitat and dependence on seed production, Gulf of St. Lawrence populations can vary greatly from year to year.
- 9 of the 14 known sites have not recently been found despite search efforts; past human disturbances have resulted in the loss of at least two sites.



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Unusually small, compact plants



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Dune-altering wave action from large storms



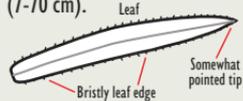
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Seed viability research

Similar Species

Rayless Alkali Aster:

Also has no ray florets (petals); minute bristles along the leaf edges; leaf tip somewhat pointed; stem typically taller (7-70 cm).



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Rayless Alkali Aster

Bathurst Aster:

Similar size and habitat, but has ray florets (petals). See page 107 for more details.



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Bathurst Aster, ray florets



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Threats to Survival

- Habitat encroachment due to road and bridge construction, and infilling.
- Hardening of upper shores required by this species when sea level rises.
- Other threats include large-scale pollution and storm events which can completely bury populations.

How You Can Help

Leave vegetated buffers that protect dunes and salt marshes. Avoid trampling, dumping, or the use of all-terrain vehicles in salt marshes.

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: AC CDC (506) 364-2658, NB DNR (506) 453-3826, PEI FFW (902) 368-6450

Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca, www.cosewic.gc.ca,

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings