

November 2015 Plant of the Month



Chrysopsis mariana (L.) Ell., Maryland Golden Aster

November's *Plant of the Month* is a native composite of New Jersey's sandy roadsides and old fields. Maryland golden aster gets its name for its similarity to the family namesake, the New World Asters. *Chrysopsis* differs from the typical genus "Aster" by its yellow petal color (no North American Aster has yellow ray flowers) and its double pappus at the base of each ray and disk flower. Maryland golden aster ranges from just north of our border (NY and RI) south to Florida and west to Texas; the Ohio River appears to be a northwestern boundary.

A synonym for this plant is *Heterotheca mariana*. Mary Hough (1983) cites herbarium records for all counties south of the Raritan River and a northern extension into Morris County. Her records omit Gloucester County yet I have the plant growing naturally on woodland edges adjacent to my home indicating a lack of specimens in the herbaria not the lack of the plants distribution. The plant is common along sunny, sandy roadsides and dry old fields. Flowering occurs between July and October.

Golden aster is a native species, with an upland FACU wetland designation. It is often in the company of native dry *Eupatorium* species, a number of upland goldenrods in addition to Virginia broom grass or little blue stem. Native Americans, the Lenni Lenape specifically, used golden aster as an aid to quite infants. Infusions of roots had a use as a tonic for younger children as well (Moermen, 1999; *North American Ethnobotany*).

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