

## October 2022 Plant of the Month



*Erigeron philadelphicus* L; Philadelphia fleabane

The October *Plant of the Month* is the beautiful native herb, *Erigeron philadelphicus*. The Philadelphia fleabane is a composite and member of the Asteraceae. The plant is an upland species that is a native to northeast North America, and is found infrequently throughout the State. Hough (1983) identifies its presence in the northwestern counties, with historical records for the Inner Coastal Plain and Delaware Bay-shore. Modern land uses and the changing floristic landscape has spread this species within its former haunts. The photo above is from a natural introduction in Gloucester County.

Philadelphia fleabane is one of a number of *Erigeron* species native to our state. At last count, New Jersey was home to four species (*Erigeron annuus*, *philadelphicus*, *pulchellus*, *strigosus*). The name, fleabane, is a nod to the folklore that members of the genus repelled fleas. The species is identified by its large, multi-petaled ray flowers, clasping leaves, and a caespitose habit. The closest relative is *Erigeron pulchellus*, which is differentiated by a number of characteristics, but specifically by the presents of superficial stolons.

Native Americans used Philadelphia fleabane for a variety of medicinal purposes. Observations made by hunters identified this species being specifically eaten for fodder by deer and cows. Woodchucks are particularly enamored with the plant, eating young shoots differentially over clover and other choice plants.

Philadelphia fleabane's floral display is long gone and will not return until next May. This species flowers in late spring through early summer so be prepared next year to see the beautiful display provided by our *Plant of the Month*.

JRA, 10/2022