



Garden Club of America's Plant of the Year

Sandy Welches, MGV '05

The Garden Club of America (GCA) has selected 'Raydon's Favorite', a compact cultivar of aromatic aster (*Symphotrichum oblongifolium* var. *augustatus*) as the 2016 recipient of its McDaniel Freeman Medal for Plant of the Year. 'Raydon's Favorite' grows two to three feet tall with a slightly larger spread. Kentucky horticulturist Allen Bush named the selection in honor of Raydon Alexander, a plantsman from San Antonio, Texas, who first introduced the plant to Bush.



Symphotrichum oblongifolium var. *augustatus*



Aromatic aster is native to scattered areas throughout eastern and central United States. Its common name refers to the mint-like scent of its fine, linear leaves, which is released when it is touched. Cluster of star-like, lavender-colored flowers with yellow centers bloom in late summer to fall, providing pollen and nectar for many insects. This low-maintenance, drought-tolerant perennial will grow in USDA Hardiness Zones 3 to 9 and AHS Heat Zones 9 to 1.

Based on votes from GCA members, the great white trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), a woodland ephemeral that blooms in spring, and yellow pitcher plant (*Saracenia flava*), a carnivorous bog dweller, received honorable mentions. Special recognition went to Ar-

kansas bluestar (*Amsonia hubrichtii*), a tough shrub-like plant that offers multi-season interest.

Since 1995, the GCA has spotlighted a native herbaceous or woody plant each year with its Freeman Medal. The goal of this program is "to draw attention to select native plants to encourage their use in the landscape and make them familiar to gardeners and more available in nurseries," says GCA Horticulture Committee Member Lucy Rhame. For more information, visit gcaamerica.org

Plants receiving Honorable Mention



trillium grandiflorum

saracenia flava



amsonia hubrichtii

amsonia hubrichtii Fall Color



Source: Gardener's Notebook (2016, March/April). Garden Club of America's Plant of the Year. The American Gardener, p. 52.