The GARDEN CLUB OF NORTH CAROLINA includes approximately 265 garden clubs with over 6,500 individual members throughout North Carolina. As a member of National Garden Clubs, Inc., this organization is active at national, state and local levels in promoting gardening and horticulture, environmental improvements in urban areas and protection of natural resources. During 2018, members of the affiliated garden clubs and other gardeners throughout North Carolina will promote the cultivation of Maryland golden-aster in home gardens and landscapes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about specific activities, programs, and membership requirements of the Garden Club of N.C., please contact:
Garden Club of North Carolina, Inc.
PO Box 33520
Raleigh, NC 27636-3520
919-834-0686
gardenclubofnc.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the North Carolina Botanical Garden, please contact:
North Carolina Botanical Garden
UNC-Chapel Hill
CB 3375
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3375
919-962-0522
ncbg.unc.edu
For additional Wildflower of the Year brochures, send a stamped, self-addressed, business envelope to the Botanical Garden's address above with attention to NCWFOY 2018.

The NORTH CAROLINA BOTANICAL GARDEN, part of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has been a leader in native plant conservation and education in the southeastern United States for over 50 years. The Garden's guiding mission is to inspire understanding, appreciation and conservation of plants and to advance a sustainable relationship between people and nature.

The North Carolina Botanical Garden's main visitor site at 100 Old Mason Farm Road in Chapel Hill features southeastern native plants displayed in a natural setting. The Garden is home to the Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden, a carnivorous plant garden, over two miles of nature trails, and an Education Center housing exhibits, a reference library and the Garden Shop.

Comprised of more than 1,000 acres, the Garden also includes Coker Arboretum, a collection of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants from the southeastern United States and Southeast Asia, and Battle Park, a wooded natural area. Both are located on the UNC campus. Mason Farm Biological Reserve, another natural area, encompasses diverse plant and animal life in open fields and woodlands.

Among other conservation efforts, the Garden manages natural areas and promotes native plant conservation. The Wildflower of the Year program is one aspect of our “Conservation through Propagation” program.

Please contact the Garden (ncbg.unc.edu, 919-962-0522) to learn about membership in the Botanical Garden Foundation, educational opportunities, guided tours and other services.

ncbg.unc.edu

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MARYLAND GOLDEN-ASTER. Chrysopsis mariana, is a cheerful member of the Asteraceae (Sunflower Family) that is common throughout the southeastern United States. It can be found in well-drained open woods and dry forests, and is a familiar sight on North Carolina roadsides from the mountains to the coast. Beginning in mid-summer and lasting through mid-fall, Maryland golden-aster brightens the landscape with clusters of brilliant, golden-yellow daisy flowers atop loosely branched, upright plants. The rigid, sturdy stems can grow up to three feet tall, and both the stems and leaves are covered in short, silky hairs.

Like all members of the sunflower family, Maryland golden-aster has an interesting floral structure. What appears to be a single flower is actually a cluster of much smaller flowers, composed of ray flowers (the “petals”) and disc flowers (the “center”). Each individual ray or disc flower is called a floret, and the entire cluster of florets is called a head. Maryland golden-aster has approximately 40-70 florets per head and each one forms a single seed. Attached to each seed is a clump of feathery hairs (called a pappus) that aids in dispersal by allowing the seed to “float” in the wind. This pappus makes the seed heads of Maryland golden-aster look like beautiful, fluffy bronze puffballs in the fall and early winter.

Maryland golden-aster is a tough, well-behaved plant that prefers dry, well-drained clay or sandy soils. It can withstand the heat and humidity of the south and is very drought-tolerant once established. In a garden setting, it is quite happy in a sunny to partly shady site with dry to average soil. It does not like to have its feet wet and will quickly decline if soils are soggy for too long. It is a relatively short-lived perennial, and although it will not spread by rhizomes, it will persist in the garden by re-seeding.

Versatile, hardy, and easy to grow, Maryland golden-aster is the perfect choice for folks new to gardening with native species. Plant it in a native perennial border or meadow garden with butterfly milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa), asters (Symphyotrichum spp.), and hairgrass (Muhlenbergia capillaris) for a bright splash of color. With its long bloom time and showy fluffy seed heads, Maryland golden-aster is sure to provide plenty of interest and enjoyment in your garden across multiple seasons.

THE NORTH CAROLINA WILDFLOWER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

The North Carolina Botanical Garden and the Garden Club of North Carolina work together to promote the use of native plants in home gardens. Each year since 1982, a showy native perennial has been chosen and seeds of that wildflower are distributed to interested gardeners. To view a list of the past 36 North Carolina Wildflowers of the Year, visit the Garden’s website: ncbg.unc.edu/north-carolina-wildflower-of-the-year

Illustrations by Dot Wilbur-Brooks

THANK YOU to volunteers at the North Carolina Botanical Garden and to the Garden Club of North Carolina. Your generous gifts of time, funding, and effort make possible the cleaning, packaging, and annual distribution of thousands of Wildflower of the Year seeds.

GROWING MARYLAND GOLDEN-ASTER FROM SEED

Maryland golden-aster seeds have fluffy hairs attached to them to aid in dispersal, but it is not necessary to remove this fluff prior to sowing. Store your seeds in an airtight container in your refrigerator until you are ready to use them. Maryland golden-aster seeds need a period of cold, moist stratification to germinate. This can be done by two methods:

1. Direct sow the seeds into your garden in the fall or early winter to allow for a natural cold stratification period over the winter months. Seeds should germinate the following spring and may bloom the second year after sowing.

2. Evenly sow the seeds on a commercial seed-starting mix in a plastic pot, press the seeds firmly into the mix and cover lightly. Water the pot by placing it in a shallow tray of water until the surface is moist, then remove from the tray and drain for 24 hours. Place the pot in a sealed plastic bag and store in the refrigerator for 4-6 weeks. Take the pot out of the refrigerator, remove the bag, and place the pot in a spot that receives bright, indirect sunlight. Germination should occur within 1-2 weeks and plants may bloom in their 2nd year. Alternatively, the pot of seeds can be kept in a sheltered spot outdoors (ideal stratification temperatures range from 32° to 45° F) throughout the winter to receive natural cold stratification.

Other important growing instructions:

- Always water seeds/seedlings by placing pot in a shallow tray of water until the surface is moist, then remove from the tray and drain.
- Seedlings benefit greatly from a routine application of an organic, water-soluble fertilizer, such as fish emulsion, applied at ¼ to ½ of the recommended strength during the growing season.
- Check your pot daily to see if it needs watering...it should not be soggy nor should it completely dry out.
- When seedlings have developed 2 or 3 pairs of true leaves, transplant into separate pots. Once seedlings are established but before they become pot-bound, plant them in permanent locations in your garden.