



Upper section of a six-foot plant of New England Aster growing in a roadside ditch near Lafayette, Christian County, Kentucky.

NEW ENGLAND ASTER

Aster novae-angliae L.

The Asteraceae (the older name was Compositae) is our largest and most diverse family and includes spring, summer, and fall-flowering species. The primary feature is the head of either or both ray flowers (sometimes mistaken for petals) and central disk flowers. More than a dozen species of *Aster* (note that the generic name is the same as the vernacular) occur in the area but this is one of the most beautiful. Stout hairy stems are clustered and tall, often exceeding six feet. Leaves are clasping and entire (without teeth on the margins). When in flower, a single plant will offer a profusion of violet-purple flowering heads at the tips of numerous branches. Like most Asters, flowering is late summer-autumn. Look for this species on mesic roadsides and in barrens or persisting from plantings around old dwellings. Look at a flowering head and it will be easy to see the origin of the genus name (from *aster* or *astron*, a star) (Asteraceae, the Aster Family).

Flowering heads of New England Aster.

