



Oregon Sea Grant Extension  
Sustainable Tourism &  
Outdoor Recreation Program

# Interpretative Fact Sheet

## Pacific Aster (*Symphyotrichum chilense*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Tourism and Business Development College of Business,  
Oregon State University Extension - Oregon Sea Grant at

<http://tourism.oregonstate.edu/>

Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional Program

<https://www.GORPguide.org>

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# Pacific Aster (*Symphyotrichum chilense*)

 [tourism.oregonstate.edu/pacific-aster-symphyotrichum-chilense/](https://tourism.oregonstate.edu/pacific-aster-symphyotrichum-chilense/)

By colliiek2

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## ***What's that pretty little herb with yellow and violet disk flowers?***

Pacific Asters (or common California aster) are a native perennial found along the Pacific coast. It inhabits coastal mountains, salt marshes, coastal dunes and bluffs, coastal scrub, and open or disturbed areas.



Courtesy NRCS, Annie Young-Mathews, 2010

***This particular aster is very versatile and can be used in bird, butterfly, and bee gardens!***

There are nearly 50 different kinds of native asters here in the Pacific Northwest. Asters are part of a very large and diverse plant family called Asteraceae. Despite its Latin name (*chilense*), it does not occur in Chile.

## **Fall Food Source**

Pacific Aster grows 1- to 3-feet tall and holds cheery disk-shaped blooms on a stalk (inflorescence) in late summer through fall. It provides a late-season food source for all kinds of pollinators including moths, bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

This structure attracts many beneficial flying butterflies and insects such as:

- Northern Checkerspot, Field Crescent and Pearl Crescent butterflies
- Wavy-lined emerald, Salt-and-pepper-Geometer, Dingy Cutworm, and Olive-shaded bird-dropping moths.

Flower heads have yellow disk center florets and fringes of many narrow light purple ray florets. Its hairy leaves are narrowly oval-shaped, pointed, and with finely serrated edges.

## Propagation and Spread

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Pacific Asters spread by rhizomes. The fibrous root system digs deep in to the soil making this plant good at stabilizing slopes and drought tolerant once established. Pacific Asters do not like soggy roots in the winter.

An early spring prune (one-third to one-half) will make the plants more bushy and wind tolerant more wind. Deadheading during the season produces more flowers. At season end, the plants can be cut or mowed to the ground in winter. Likes full sun to partial shade.

**Propagate your own from seed:** No treatment needed. Seeds may have little fluffy bits attached which help them carry in the wind. This fluff does not need to be detached. Just sprinkle a handful of collected seed fluff in the desired area in the spring and watch for sprouts with a week. Caution when weeding! It will look like a common weed so be aware when pulling.

A wide variety of asters are now available through several nurseries. They are great companion plants that work well with other shrubs and perennials along the coast.

Even better? This aster will tolerate high salinity, there are no known pests or problems, and they are deer resistant!

## REFERENCES:

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plant Fact Sheet for Pacific Asters (<http://plants.usda.gov>)
- HGTV (<https://www.hgtv.com/outdoors/flowers-and-plants/aster-flowers>)
- Wikipedia, *symphyotrichum chilense* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphyotrichum\\_chilense](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphyotrichum_chilense))
- Watershed Nursery, plant finder (<https://www.watershednursery.com/nursery/plant-finder/symphyotrichum-chilensis/>)
- Portland Nursery (<https://www.portlandnursery.com/perennials/aster/>)