

Asters: aristocrats or stepchildren?

Written by Laura Lee Rose

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Fall is in the air and night temperatures are at a lovely low after the humidity of the past summers' sticky caress. The roadsides and fields are blooming whites, yellows and lavenders as flowers are desperately trying to attract bees, flies, moths, and butterflies.

As the day length shortens many plants are coaxed into putting on a show of flowers, offering nectar and pollen in exchange for services rendered by the hairy legs and sticky mouths of insects. Not all flowers need those services and pollen can be spread by animals' fur, water and wind. The flowers on these plants are usually dull green. The pollen is very sticky, especially inside of your nose and sinuses. *National Geographic* Magazine did an article years ago examining different types of pollen under an electron microscope. The wind pollinated pollens were especially malevolent looking.

Most insect pollinated annuals and perennials in the Asteraceae or Compositae family (aster, daisy, or sunflower) signal pollinators with colorful strap-shaped ray petals, usually white or bright. The disc flowers in the center have nectar and pollen which are

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