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PLANT PORTRAIT

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1162. *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* (Riddell) G.L. Nesom

Compositae

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Summary

Symphyotrichum oolentangiense (Riddell) G.L. Nesom (Compositae: Astereae: Symphyotrichinae) is described and illustrated. A very brief biographical note of John Leonard Riddell, the collector and author of the species, is offered. Notes are provided for the species' cultivation, propagation, likely pests and diseases, and availability. A full synonymy is given, along with type citations and known presence of type material, together with relevant notes. Selected illustrations of the species are cited, and statements of the species' distribution, habitat and ecology, phenology, etymology, conservation status and vernacular names provided.

INTRODUCTION

Other than the late-season flowering of the many Compositae in the tribe Heliantheae (the SUNFLOWER tribe), perhaps one of the biggest splashes of colour in autumnal gardens comes from the many cultivated species and hundreds of cultivars of MICHAELMAS DAISIES (see Sutton, 2001) from the large tribe Astereae. The MICHAELMAS DAISIES belonging to *Symphyotrichum* Nees, and are largely derived from two North American species – *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* (L.) G.L. Nesom (the NEW ENGLAND ASTER) and *S. novii-belgii* (L.) G.L. Nesom (NEW YORK ASTER). Our species, *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* (Riddell) G.L. Nesom (Compositae: Astereae: Symphyotrichinae) (the SKY BLUE ASTER, AZURE ASTER, or BLUE DEVIL) (Plate 1162), can be found in the North American Prairie plantings at Wakehurst, in the South Central Prairie 'border', along with one of the other blue-rayed symphyotrichums, *Symphyotrichum laeve* (L.) Á. Löve & D. Löve (the so-called SMOOTH ASTER or the GLAUCOUS MICHAELMAS DAISY) (see Hind & Lambkin, 2023b[2024b]). *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* also stands in somewhat stark contrast in Wakehurst's plantings against a backdrop of the yellows of *Solidago nemoralis* Aiton (see Hind & Lambkin, 2023a[2024a]), *Coreopsis lanceolata* L. (see

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Hind et al., 2023[2024]) and *Rudbeckia hirta* L. (see Hind & Lambkin, 2023c[2024c]), the white *Parthenium integrifolium* L. (see Hind & King, 2023[2024]) (all in the Compositae), and the architectural whitish-flowered *Eryngium yuccifolium* Michx. (Umbelliferae) (see Rix & Lambkin, 2023 [2024]).

Most gardeners would immediately state that they belong to *Aster* L., and this is where they were placed by Jones (1980), into *Aster* subgen. *Symphyotrichum* (Nees) A.G. Jones (Jones, 1980), but in this instance they would be considered incorrect; *Aster* is essentially an Old World genus, with only one species found in North America. Shaw (2014) and Hind (2023[2024]) have outlined what has happened to many names amongst cultivated asters, and accepted their repositioning in a variety of genera; *Symphyotrichum* has a long history. Back in the first half of the nineteenth century Nees von Esenbeck (1776–1858) established the genus *Symphyotrichum*, based on *S. unctuosum* Nees, a species described from living material from a plant of horticultural origin, sent by W.J. Hooker from Glasgow, in Scotland, to Bonn, in Germany (Nees, 1833). This is now considered a synonym of *S. novi-belgii* – the generitype. *Symphyotrichum* contains just over 90 species (Nesom, 2000), largely North American (with 77 species) (Brouillet et al. 2006), two widespread pantropical species, and a few South American species (see Hind & Strange, 2018).

Nesom tackled the infratribal classification of the Astereae, the second largest tribe in the Compositae, in two significant treatments. The first (Nesom, 1994) recognized a total of 14 subtribes, seven of these were new, including the Symphyotrichinae G.L. Nesom, within which *Symphyotrichum* was placed along with 12 other genera, totalling some 183 species. A short while later he revised his concepts (Nesom, 1994 [1995]), and finally recognized a subtribe of only five genera, containing a little over 100 species (Nesom & Robinson, 2006[2007]). *Symphyotrichum* is divided into two subgenera, with a total of 12 sections (Nesom, 1994).

Symphyotrichum oolentangiense was placed in *Symphyotrichum* subgen. *Symphyotrichum* sect. *Concinni* (Nees) G.L. Nesom (Nesom, 1994), which also included the two North American species *S. laeve* (also grown at Wakehurst – see Hind & Lambkin, 2023b[2024b]) and *S. retroflexum* (DC.) G.L. Nesom. Semple (in Semple et al., 2002: 133) has now reduced the section to ser. *Concinni* (Nees) Semple, but only included *S. laeve* and *S. oolentangiense*, *S. retroflexum* having been placed in ser. *Symphyotrichum*, along with the generitype (*S. novi-belgii*) and *S. robynsianum* (J. Rousseau) Brouillet & Labrecque.

In his first subtribal treatment Nesom (1994: 212) considered the ray florets uniseriate, but later (Nesom & Robinson, 2006[2007]: 335) indicated a range of '1(−2–4)-seriate', and within *Symphyotrichum* 1–2-seriate. The genus is also characterized by a reduced indumentum (often to lines of hairs on the stems), the plants are usually eglandular, and the inflorescences often racemose or almost spicate. Capitula are borne on bracteate or bracteolate pedicels, have phyllaries with a well-defined apical patch (clearly seen in our material from Wakehurst as a distinct green diamond shape), achenes that are somewhat short, distinctly flattened (obcompressed), and often with a few distinct veins on each surface.

In this issue of North American Prairie Compositae – Part 2, along with *Helianthus occidentalis* Riddell (Heliantheae, the Western Sunflower – see Hind & King, 2025[2026]), *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* (as *Aster oolentangiensis* Riddell) is one of two species collected and described by John Leonard Riddell (Leyden, Massachusetts, 20th February 1807 – New Orleans, Louisiana, 7th October 1865). Evidently a polymath, a botanist by training, he was also a chemist, geologist (surveying the geology of Ohio and Louisiana, and later Texas – see Riess, 1977 and Skinner & Riess, 1985) and palaeontologist, medic, numismatist, physicist, politician, author, educator (he lectured widely on a variety of subjects, offering the lectures on subscription), and was credited by Bailey Jr. (1883) as having 'invented the binocular microscope' (see also Riess, 1977, at length) as well as doing much work on infectious diseases using a compound microscope. It is also clear that Riddell was no mean inventor (see Riess, 1977), and had provided early views on atomic theory and the constitution of matter, long before such concepts became mainstream. Lowden (1997) considered him, and William Starling Sullivant



PLATE 1162 *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* DEBORAH LAMBKIN

(1803–1873), pioneers of frontier botany, and both well-published on the botany of Ohio. Riess's rather detailed biography (Riess, 1977) also emphasized Riddell's ability to 'participate in local cultural, business, and social activities', clearly enjoying a good measure of financial success, unlike many modern scientists, let alone Riddell's contemporaries. Riess also provided glimpses of Riddell's personal life at length, to the point that he considered Riddell an 'eccentric scientist', but one who clearly cared a great deal for his family.

CULTIVATION

The Wakehurst Prairie planting of *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* (2020–759*1/ Accession No. 1010–759) can be found in the South Central Prairie 'border', growing in full sun. Whilst the plants will certainly tolerate light shade it is really a sun-loving species, best grown in well-drained and not persistently damp or wet situations. At 60 to 90 cm tall, it is an ideal border plant for native plant gardens, meadow plantings, clearly for prairie plants, but also woodland margins or naturalized areas in mixed borders, and can be a useful semi-specimen plant if grown in clumps. Space plants up to 60 cm apart in an ordinary border, but perhaps only 30 cm apart in a prairie planting. It can also be grown in containers, but should be in those at least 45 cm diameter and 30 cm deep. Without repropagation, plants have a moderate life span of between 5- and 10-years life expectancy Diboll & Cox (2023: 171) Since the seed is excellent for birds, gardeners should weigh up whether to deadhead or leave the seeding/ed top growth for winter interest, perhaps tidying up the plants as new spring growth appears at ground level. As with many species of Michaelmas Daisy, the flowering stems are useful for cut flowers, although with this species it is advisable to get them into water fairly quickly. Plants are found in USDA Hardiness Zones 3 to 8, so the species is fully hardy in the UK. Jeffrey (1992) also rated it as Z5 (fully hardy), and the RHS as H7 – fully hardy in the most extreme conditions.

Propagation. *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* is one of the most versatile when it comes to propagation, where typically seed propagation provides the greatest returns, although cuttings and division are invariably guaranteed to be successful.

Dry stratification. Ripe achenes can be pre-treated by subjecting them to cold (of c. 0°C) for a month or more (typically between 30 and 60 days). Dry achenes can be stored in zip-locking bags in a fridge, or in a rodent-proof container (typically a storage tin) in an unheated building (outhouse, shed, etc.) over winter depending upon the species. The achenes can then be sown directly into prepared ground in their final growing position/s or, for those species that don't mind disturbance, the achene/sand mix can be sown in pots or trays and seedlings pricked out when they're large enough to handle.

Cold moist stratification. Ripe achenes require 4–6 weeks treatment to break their dormancy and improve germination; this method effectively mimics overwintered achenes under a layer of soil or snow. The achenes should be sown (in the autumn or early winter) onto the surface of a damp (but not soaking wet) proprietary seed compost mix in pots or trays and covered with a thin layer of grit or vermiculite. The pots should then be bagged and placed in a fridge for between four and six weeks, or may be left outside or placed in a coldframe or cold greenhouse. If the achenes begin to germinate, remove the pots from the fridge and, bag-free, maintain them at in warm bright conditions. When the seedlings are large enough to handle, they can be potted on, keeping them moist all the time. Alternatively, the achenes can be sown in the spring, provided they have been stratified. The achenes can be mixed with moist sand and stored in the fridge for about 60 days before sowing. The achene/sand mix can be spread into the plants' final growing positions.

Cuttings & Division. One option for vegetative propagation is the use of basal or stem cuttings, which should be taken from early- to mid- season growth; 5 to 10 cm cuttings, with the lower leaves removed, with their bases dipped in hormone rooting compound/powder – the use of rooting hormone powder is optional, but may provide higher success rates. On the whole it is best to use relatively nutrient poor composts to root prairie plant cuttings in, and a proprietary seed compost will suffice, ideally not peat-based. Optionally, using a mix of sand and Vermiculite or Perlite, the cuttings should be evenly spaced around the edge of small pots, and kept in a bright location, indoors, in a covered propagator and, once rooted (in about 4 to 8 weeks) can be potted up and grown on prior to transplantation into the garden, about 60 cm apart. One word of caution, cuttings taken in the summer, or from new growth, have a low success rate, compared with those taken from early- to mid- season growth, as they usually fail to produce vegetative growth at the base of the stem after flowering is initiated. Leafy stems wilt very rapidly, so the aim should be to take cuttings early in the morning, and keep them in the shade, or enclosed in a plastic bag or propagator.

Other options for vegetative propagation include rhizome cuttings in addition to division. Reasonably long segments of the rhizome (ideally with a terminal bud) can be planted horizontally and covered with soil or horticultural grit (c. 2.5 cm deep) in their final position (not forgetting to mark where they are to avoid unwarranted disturbance before they start growing in the spring), or in pots to be planted out later when established. Extra protection of autumn-divided rhizomatous plants, with a good mulch, may be advisable in areas prone to very cold winters. Once the rhizomatous rootstock has well-established there is scope for dividing the plants by splitting the rhizomes, with pieces possessing actively growing shoots likely to provide the best material. Rhizomatous species can be divided at almost any time during the year. Straight division of clumps of mature plants just requires them to be dug up, divided appropriately and transplanted when conditions permit. This should be done early in the morning or early evening to avoid too rapid wilting of the transplants – which should be watered-in well.

Pests & Diseases. *Symphyotrichum oolentangien*se is usually pest and disease resistant, but like many of the Michaelmas Daisy relatives, too high a humidity can make them prone to powdery mildew. Either open up the border planting to allow more air flow or, if container grown, move the plants further apart. The RHS (2025) also suggested the species, like others in the genus, may be susceptible to leaf and bud eelworms, slugs and snails, the latter two perhaps more so on young emergent leaves and shoots in the spring.

Availability. Currently, it would appear that there is only one supplier of the species in the U.K. (Cubey et al., 2023), along with a couple of cultivars, compared with the previous year (Cubey et al., 2022), and no suppliers in the current 37th Edition (Cubey et al., 2024). Historical records of the species are relatively few, the species is absent from Yeo's account (under *Aster*) (Yeo, 2000), and in Sutton (2001) (under *Aster*). Both seed/achenes and container grown plants are available in the United States.

NOMENCLATURE & DESCRIPTION

Symphyotrichum oolentangiense (Riddell) G.L. Nesom, Phytologia 77 (3): 288 (1994)[1995].

Aster oolentangiensis Riddell, W. J. Med. Phys. Sci. 8 (3): 495 (Jan.–March April 1835). Type: [U.S.A.:] 'Sept. – Oct. Pale b. 2f. ♃. sw. Wor. O. Forests on the Oolentangy River. I first discovered this plant in 1832, on the large, forest clad mount, near Worthington, O[hio].' Type material: GH(00872104 – det. as 'ISOLECTOTYPE' by A.G. Jones), NY(00161964 – selected

as the 'LECTOTYPE' by Jones). Note: Jones (1983: 39) discussed the location of Riddell's material, suggesting that much had been lost, and selected the material in NY as the lectotype.

Aster azureus Lindl. ex Hook., Companion Bot. Mag. 1 (4): 98 (Nov. 1835). Type: [U.S.A.: Missouri.] 'St. Louis. [*Drummond*]'. Type material: GH(00872106 – s.n.), K(000890582 – Gray's annotation label against this specimen says 'A marked species, of which I add specimens with the lower leaves. AG.', ex Herb. Hookerianum, on same sheet as the following collection), K(000890583 – with '199. St. Louis./ Drummond' written on the sheet adjacent to the rh flowering stem, has the full Latin description as published, from Lindley's notes by Hooker (see Hooker, 1835: 98), attached over this specimen, and a further label from Torrey & Gray's Flora North America, gives 'Mahato River (Upper Mississippi Nicollet.' appears beneath the rootstock with a single leaf and the inflorescence branch – which are relevant to Gray's comments on the lh label in his handwriting, ex Herb. Hookerianum), K(000890651 – s.n., which Jones considered authentic material but not part of the type collection, based solely upon the preprinted date of Drummond's label, which may well be the distribution date of material with this type of label), P(00711933 – s.n., via Lindley, 'hb. Nees', and Herb. Schultz Bipontinus', det. as 'ISOLECTOTYPE' by Jones, ex Herb. Benthamianum), TEX(00373487 – s.n.). Note: Jones (1983: 39) selected material in CGE as the lectotype, and a duplicate as the isolectotype, but also noted other material in K, which he simply noted as 'authentic', perhaps failing to understand what had been published by Hooker, and how the material in K was annotated, rather than where the Lindley material was located. Jones stated that he had 'designated' the lectotype and isolectotype in 1981. However, this was never published then and was effectively only formally designated in 1983.

Aster azureus Lindl. var. *scabrior* Engelm. ex Small, Fl. S.E. U.S. (Small): 1215 (1903). Type/s: not specifically stated, merely 'Ontario and Minnesota through Missouri to Louisiana.' Note: Neither Burgess, nor Small, listed the type for this variety in the listing of types on p. 1339.

Aster capillaceus E.S. Burgess, Fl. S.E. U.S. (Small): 1215, 1339 (1903). Types: [p. 1215:] 'In dry grounds. Wisconsin and Illinois through Missouri to Texas. Late summer and fall.' [U.S.A.:] 'Mo. *Engelmann*, Sept., 1838, in Herb. MO. B. G.' Holotype: MO(3844927).

Aster vernalis Engelm. ex E.S. Burgess, Fl. S.E. U.S. (Small): 1215, 1339 (1903). Type: [p. 1215:] 'In open woods and on prairies west of Houston, Texas. Spring and summer.' [U.S.A.:] 'Tex., *Lindheimer*, Mar., 1842, in Herb. Mo. B. G.' Holotype: MO(2140797 – '160'); isotypes:? K(000890652 – s.n., but an annotation by Jones suggested that this may be part of the type material), MO(2140796 – may well be another isotype).

Aster poaceus E.S. Burgess in Fl. S.E. U.S. (Small): 1215, 1339 (1903). Type: [p. 1215:] 'On plains and prairies, Missouri to Alabama, Oklahoma and Texas. Summer and fall.' [U.S.A.:] 'Mo., Iron Mt., *Engelmann*, 1845, in Herb. Mo. B. G.' Holotype: MO(3031919).

Aster capillaris E.S. Burgess, Mem. Torrey Bot. Club 13: 176 (1906). Type: 'W. N. Y., *Silver Cr*. ravine; growing out of the shale-wall of the gorge, near its base, with radicals 4 × 1 ½ in. or less, Au. 17, '96. [*Burgess* s.n.]'. Type material: not located. Lectotype (selected by Lamboy & Jones, 1987: 289): ILL(00006220 – 'In the vicinity of New York City. September 28, 1903. *Burgess* s.n.'). Note: the ILL material was determined as the 'lectotype' by Lamboy & Jones (1987: 289), with the comment that the 'figured specimen is the only one cited in the protologue, and we have been unable to locate it. We have chosen an authentic specimen as the lectotype.' This is not a confirmation that this sheet is of original material seen/used by Burgess (which would make this lectotypification invalid), nor indeed that it is conspecific with the material collected in August 1896 by Burgess; Burgess's collection of *Aster* types is supposedly in NY, but authentic type material is not currently to be found amongst the images of the virtual herbarium. However, Lamboy's determination from 1987 indicated that this material was of *Aster divaricatus* L. (= Eurybia divaricata (L.) G.L. Nesom).

Aster azureus Lindl. f. *incarnatus* (as *incarnata*) Farw., Amer. Midl. Naturalist 9 (7): 278 (1925). Type: [U.S.A.: Michigan.] 'Fields at Oxford. [Oakland Co.] Occasional; [*Farwell*] No. 7191, Sept. 24th [1924]' Type material: BLH(0000052), GH(00002895).

Aster azureus Lindl. f. *laevicaulis* Fernald, Rhodora 51 (No. 605): 94 (1949). Type: 'Type from Illinois: Fountaindale, Winnebago Co., 1867, *M. S. Bebb* in Herb. Gray.' Holotype: GH(00002896).

Aster azureus Lindl. var. *poaceus* (E.S. Burgess ex Small) Fernald, Rhodora 51 (No. 605): 95 (1949).

Aster shortii Lindl. ssp. *azureus* (Lindl.) Avers, Rhodora 55 (No. 658): 324 (1953).

Aster oolentangiensis Riddell f. *incarnatus* (Farw.) A.G. Jones, Bull. Torrey Bot. Club 110 (1): 41 (1983).

Aster oolentangiensis Riddell var. *laevicaulis* (Fernald) A.G. Jones, Bull. Torrey Bot. Club 110 (1): 41 (1983).

Aster oolentangiensis Riddell var. *poaceus* (E.S. Burgess) A.G. Jones, Bull. Torrey Bot. Club 110 (1): 41 (1983).

Symphyotrichum oolentangiense (Riddell) G.L. Nesom var. *poaceum* (E.S. Burgess) G.L. Nesom, Phytologia 77 (3): 288 (Sept. 1994)[31 Jan. 1995].

Symphyotrichum oolentangiense (Riddell) G.L. Nesom var. *laevicaule* Mohlenbr., Vasc. Fl. Illinois: 152 (2014), nom. inval. Note: published as a comb. nov. without the correct basionym reference, contrary to Art 41.5 ICN (Turland et al., 2018).

Symphyotrichum oolentangiense (Riddell) G.L. Nesom var. *laevicaule* (Fernald) Mohlenbr., Phytoneuron 2015–67: 1 (2015b).

Illustrations (selected). Burgess in Britton & Brown, Ill. Fl. N. US & Canada, 3: 362, Fig. 3751 (1898 – as *Aster azureus*); Burgess, Mem. Torrey Bot. Club 13: 176, Fig. 26 (1906) (as *Aster capillaris*) (b&w); Britton & Brown Ill. Fl. N. US & Canada, Ed. 2, 3: 414, Fig. 4298 (1913 – as *Aster azureus*) (b&w); Fisher, Dicot. Ohio 2(3 – Asteraceae): 75 (1988) (b&w) (as *Aster oolentangiensis*); Diggs et al., Shinnners & Mahler's Ill. Fl. N Cent. Texas: 321 (1999) (as *Aster oolentangiensis*) (b&w); Antonio & Masi (2001: 264–265, as *Aster azureus*) (col); Yatskievych, Steyermark's Fl. Missouri 2: Pl. 244 g & h (2006) (b&w); Mohlenbrock (2015a: 172, Fig. 88) (b&w); Chadde, Minnesota Fl. (2019a: 185) (b&w); Chadde, Wisconsin Fl. (2019b: 196) (b&w); Diboll & Cox (2023: 171) (col).

Caespitose perennial herbs, 20–150 cm tall; rootstock short-rhizomatous and rhizomes horizontal or with branched, woody caudices. *Stems* few (1–5+), erect, often purplish, (at least in lower parts), eglandular, glabrous or hispidulous, distally short-pilose. *Leaves* thick, firm, polymorphic, margins entire or crenate-serrate, scabrous, apices mucronate, faces scabrous, abaxial strigose to piloso-strigose or hirsute, adaxial strongly strigose, rosettiform and basal leaves withering by flowering, long-petiolate (petioles narrowly-winged, bases dilated, sheathing, ciliate-margined), lamina ovate to lanceolate-ovate, 40–150(−180) × 10–40(−60) mm, bases ± cordate (often excentrically so) or rounded to attenuate on petiole, margins crenate-serrate to subentire, apices rounded or obtuse to acute, lower-cauline leaves petiolate (petioles narrowly winged, base amplexicaul), lamina ovate or ovate-lanceolate to lanceolate, 30–130 × 12–70 mm, gradually or ± abruptly reduced distally, bases rounded to attenuate, margins entire, scabrous, apices acute or attenuate, callus-tipped, upper leaves sessile or sometimes short-petiolate and ± winged (appressed or ascending), lamina lanceolate or linear-lanceolate to subulate, 5–80 × 1–10 mm, markedly reduced distally (conspicuously so on inflorescence branches, and almost scale-like beneath involucres), bases attenuate to cuneate or ± rounded, margins entire. Inflorescences of many-headed lax panicles, inflorescence branches ascending, stiff, sometimes long-arching and pedicels secund, ± ridged, 0.2–6 cm, glabrate, densely leafy or bracteolate with small, ± appressed scale-like branch leaves or bracteoles, ± strigose, uppermost bracteoles often revolute-margined and grading with lowermost phyllaries. *Capitula* heterogamous and radiate, c. 25 mm diam., heterochromous; *involucres* campanulate to cylindrical-campanulate, 4.5–8 mm (becoming turbinate when pressed); *phyllaries* (3–)4–6-seriate,

appressed or outer slightly spreading, lanceolate to oblong-lanceolate, gradate, imbricate, bases indurate, margins scarious, erose, hyaline, ciliolate, apices with green diamond-shaped zones, apices acute to acuminate or caudate (then tips often involute), mucronulate to apiculate, glabrous, outer phyllaries 1.5–2 mm long,; receptacle alveolate, margins with acute scales. *Ray florets* (10–)13–20(−25), female, uniseriate, ray limbs (5–)8–12(−14) mm long × 1.4–1.7 mm wide, usually pale to azure-blue to violet-purple, rarely rosy, white or bluish white), glabrous. *Disc florets* (15–)20–25(−30), hermaphrodite, corollas light yellow turning deep purple (post anthesis), 4–5 mm, tubes much shorter than narrowly funnelform throats, glabrous, corolla lobes triangular to lanceolate, 0.4–0.7 mm (lobes sparsely pubescent). *Achenes* oblong-obovoid, ± obcompressed, 1.8–2 mm long × c. 1 mm wide, 4–5-veined/ribbed, faces glabrous or sparsely setuliferous, setulae (when present) of twin-hairs, apices subequal to unequal, scarcely separate, apical cells acute, achene body dull purple or straw-coloured with purple streaks; carpopodium inconspicuous; *pappus setae* 3–4 mm, persistent, barbellate, cream or slightly rose-tinged. ***2n*** = 32 (Figure 1).

DISTRIBUTION. *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* is widespread from SE Canada south to NE Mexico: Canada (Ontario); U.S.A. (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin); northeast Mexico (Coahuila).

HABITAT & ECOLOGY. Open disturbed woodland. Wunderlin et al. (2020: 393) considered the species rare in Florida. Open, dry, sandy, loamy, or rocky soils, dry to wet (seasonally drying) prairies, alvars (thin alkaline soils over limestone bedrock, creating a sparse grassland vegetation), glades, bluffs, dunes, barrens, open deciduous (often disturbed) woods, oak and/or pine savannas; 50–500 m.

PHENOLOGY. Flowering between August and October.

ETYMOLOGY. The generic name, *Symphyotrichum* is derived from the Greek *symphyo* (συμφυω = united), *trichos* (τριχός = hairs), referring to the pappus setae that are united at the base. The specific epithet, *oolentangiense*, refers to the Oolentangy River (where Riddell first discovered the plant), a 156 km tributary of the Scioto River, Ohio.

CONSERVATION STATUS. A common and widespread species, and under no obvious threat throughout its whole range. LC (Least Concern). However, individual States in the species' distribution have recorded the species as EN (Endangered) (albeit lacking IUCN formulaic assessment) in New York, based on both reduced population numbers and sizes (Renzi, 2025), with some populations 'extirpated'. Renzi also indicated that the species has a 'Global conservation status rank of G5 – Secure globally – effectively agreeing with the IUCN Red List of Threatened species, where there is no record.

VERNACULAR NAMES. SKY BLUE ASTER (Antonio & Masi, 2001: 264); PRAIRIE HEART-LEAVED ASTER (Chadde, 2019b: 196) SKYBLUE ASTER (Wunderlin et al., 2020: 392; Diboll & Cox, 2023: 170), AZURE ASTER, BLUE DEVIL (Yatskievych, 2006: 300).

DISCUSSION

Jones (1989) suggested that *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense* (as *Aster oolentangiensis*) hybridizes with *S. drummondii* (Lindl.) G.L. Nesom (DRUMMOND'S ASTER) and *S. laeve* (L.) A. Löve & D. Löve (both x = 8 species), but cited no representative collections.

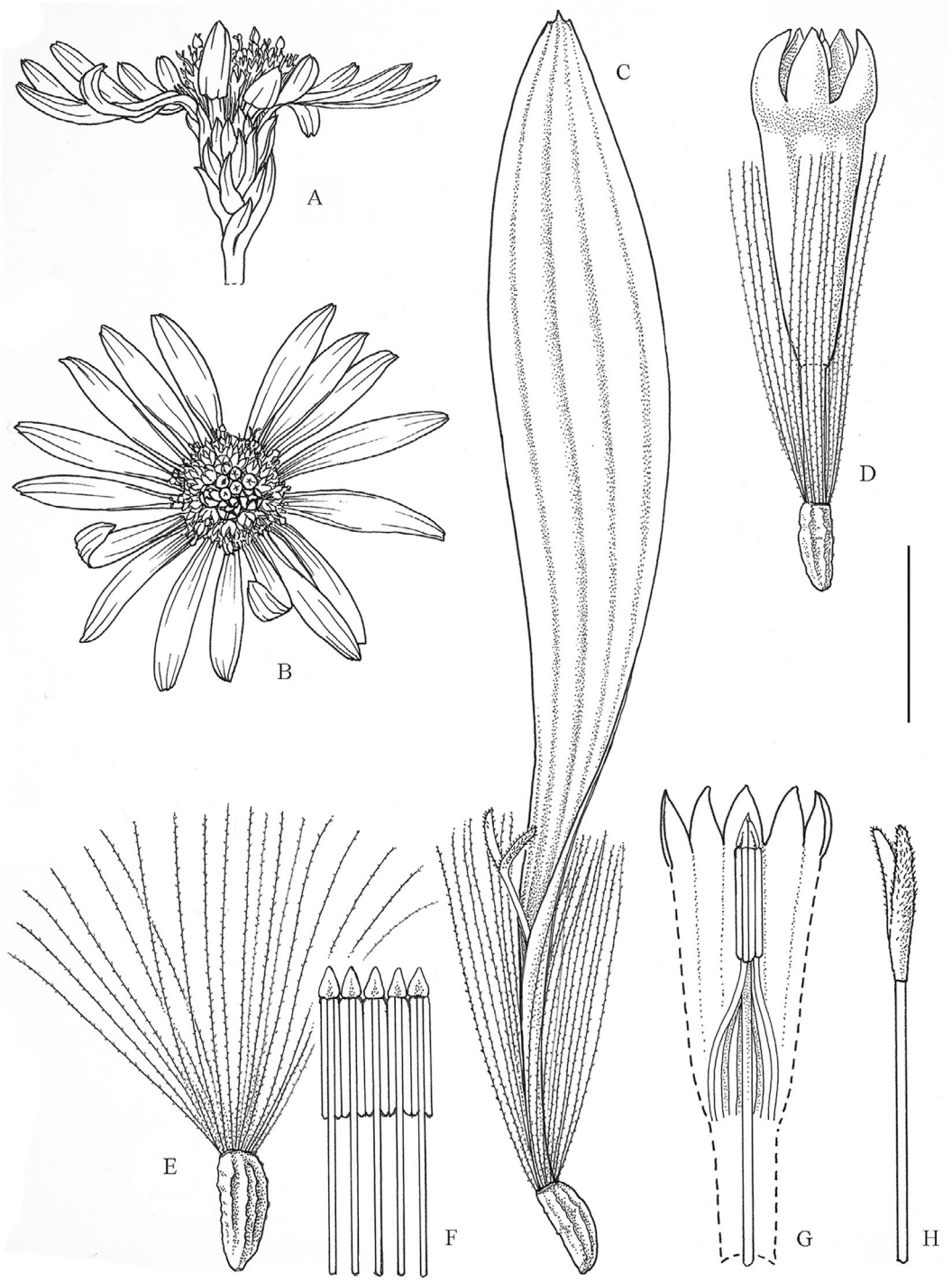


FIGURE 1 *Symphyotrichum oolentangiense*. A, side view of capitulum; B, top view of capitulum; C, ray floret; D, disc floret; E, disc floret achene and pappus; F, anther cylinder opened out; G, disc floret corolla opened out to show attachment point of anther filaments; H, disc floret style and style arms. Scale bar: C–H = 2 mm; G = 3 mm; A, B = 1 cm. Drawn by Deborah Lambkin from material cultivated (Accession No. 1010–759) in the South Central Prairie border of the North American Prairies planting at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew at Wakehurst Place.

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