

# Tatarian Aster

*Located in the Pollinator Garden*

*By Janice Hensley*

The Teaching Garden is home to two very happy tatarian asters (*Aster tataricus*). These late blooming flowers were transplanted from the home garden of the late Russell Stuebaker, horticulturalist and longtime Tulsa World garden writer, to the care of Rogers County Master Gardeners over 10 years ago.

It's likely that the tatarian aster's name dates to the thirteenth century, the time of Genghis Khan and the Turkish-Mongolian Tartars, many of whose descendants live in Tatarstan, along the Volga River in Russia. Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) first penned the genus name in 1753 from the Greek *Astēr* for star, referring to the star-like form of the flowers.

Our aster is a whopping 5 to 6 feet tall and never needs staking. (It can reach 8 feet!) This underused perennial has lavender flowers with a bright yellow center and blooms from late September through November or until frost. During late fall, pollinators have fewer resources for food, as there are fewer flowers to visit. The tatarian aster is one of the longest-blooming asters producing lots of flowers that are magnets for butterflies for weeks on end. While you are waiting for the fall blooms, the plant shows off its beautiful large, paddle-like shaped leaves that are dark green and can be 6 inches wide and reach from 16-24 inches long.

While tatarian aster is not classified as invasive, it grows vigorously. This year we will pull the large stands of asters back to a smaller circle size because they do creep into the garden when you are not looking! What a wonderful addition to our garden with a fun history in the way we obtained it. Thank you, Russell Stuebaker.

