

# *Symphyotrichum jessicae* (Piper) G.L. Nesom

synonym: *Aster jessicae* Piper

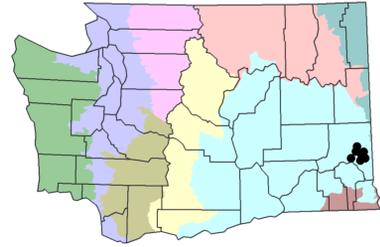
Jessica's aster

Asteraceae - aster family

status: State Endangered, Federal Species of Concern,

BLM strategic

rank: G2 / S1S2



**General Description:** Robust, erect, perennial herb, up to 15 dm tall, but averaging about 9 dm; with thick creeping rhizomes, often growing in large clumps. Herbage and involucral bracts covered with dense, uniform, soft hairs, but lower parts sometimes nearly hairless. Middle stem leaves sessile, clasping, more or less auriculate, broadly lance-shaped, entire, 6-13 x 1.5-3.5 cm; lower leaves petiolate, often withering as the season progresses.

**Floral Characteristics:** Inflorescence paniclelike, with numerous radiate heads, forming a broad cluster at the top of the plant. Involucre 7-10 mm high; rays lavender, 12-20 mm long. Flowers late July to mid September

**Fruits:** Hairy achenes; pappus tawny. Seeds mature September to early October.

**Identification Tips:** Distinguished by its unusually robust nature, dense hairs, and clasping, more or less auriculate leaf bases. *Symphyotrichum spathulatum* var. *intermedium*\* may be found nearby, but generally inhabits more mesic microhabitats, has smaller flowers (involucre 5-7 mm high), possesses few to no hairs, and lacks clasping leaf bases.

**Range:** Local endemic of southeastern WA and adjacent ID.

**Habitat/Ecology:** Palouse grasslands and prairie/forest transition zones, often in dry areas associated with small drainages. Elevations in WA: 580-760 m (1900-2500 ft). Jessica's aster can tolerate moderate disturbance. Associated species include ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), and bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*).

**Comments:** This species has a small range, few populations, and limited remaining habitat. Most of its habitat has been converted to agriculture. Remnant populations are currently threatened by chemical sprays, road construction and maintenance, domestic grazing, and invasion of exotic weeds. It is also rare in ID.

**References:** Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 20.



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