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MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

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Amsonia tabernaemontana •

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Plant of Merit

Species Native to Missouri

Common Name: blue star 🕛

Type: Herbaceous perennial

Family: Apocynaceae

Native Range: Central United States

Zone: 3 to 9

Height: 2.00 to 3.00 feet Spread: 2.00 to 3.00 feet Bloom Time: May Bloom Description: Blue Sun: Full sun to part shade

Water: Medium Maintenance: Low

Suggested Use: Rain Garden Flower: Showy, Good Cut

Leaf: Good Fall

Tolerate: Deer, Drought, Clay Soil

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Culture

Easily grown in average, medium, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Prefers moist, loamy soils. Tolerates some drought. When grown in full sun, plants often require no pruning or staking. When grown in some shade and/or in rich soils, however, plants tend to become more open and floppy and often require staking or pruning. For a neater appearance, particularly for shade-grown plants, consider cutting back stems by 1/2 to 1/3 after flowering to promote bushy growth and, if desired, a more rounded foliage mound.

Noteworthy Characteristics

Amsonia tabernaemontana, commonly called eastern bluestar, is native to portions of the eastern and southern United States where it is found in moist woodlands, stream banks, slopes, ditches, and open fields. An erect, clump-forming plant which features terminal, pyramidal clusters of 3/4", soft light blue, star-like flowers in late spring atop erect, leafy stems growing 2-3' tall. Narrow, willow-shaped, dull green foliage may turn an attractive yellow in fall. Stems and leaves produce a milky latex when cut or torn which protects the plant from herbivory. The blooms are attractive to butterflies and other insect pollinators.

Genus name honors Dr. John Amson (1698-1765?), an English physician and amateur botanist who lived and worked in Williamsburg, Virginia during the colonial period.

Specific epithet honours Jakob Theodor von Bergzabern (d. 1590) who Latinized his name as Tabernaemontanus.

Problems

No serious insect or disease problems. May require staking to avoid flopping in overly rich soils or shady conditions. Rust may occur. Deer tend to avoid this plant.

Uses

Borders, rock gardens, cottage gardens, open woodland areas, rain gardens. Best when massed. Flowers can be used in fresh cut arrangements.



Back to Previous Page

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