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*Aster novi-belgii*

[Synonyms : *Aster brumalis*, *Aster caespitosus*, *Aster dumosus*, *Aster floribundus*, *Aster longifolius*, *Aster paniculatus*, *Aster tradescantii* ]

**MICHAELMAS-DAISY** is a perennial. Native to eastern and northern North America it has daisy-like yellow or reddish centred, purple-blue or white flowers.

It is also known as *Aster de Virginie* (French), *Blodyn Mihangel* (Welsh), Bushy aster, Confused Michaelmas daisy, *Glattblatt-Aster* (German), *Höstaster* (Swedish), *Hvězdnice novobelgická* (Czech), Michaelmas aster, Michelmas aster, *Neubelgien-Aster* (German), New York aster, New York star, *Nieuw-Nederlandse aster* (Dutch), and *Syysasteri* (Finnish); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of afterthought, and farewell.

*Novi-belgii* means ‘of or from New York (USA)’.

Before 1752 the plant was called Aster or Starwort but following the introduction of the Gregorian calendar (which had the effect of moving Michaelmas Day earlier) the plant was re-christened michaelmas-daisy as this earlier Saint Day coincided with its flowering. Not surprisingly michaelmas-daisy is dedicated to St. Michael (29<sup>th</sup> September).

One of the first asters to be re-christened it was introduced to England in 1633 from North America. It was brought in by John Tradescant the Younger (1608-1662) whose equally famous father was gardener to Charles I, a position his son succeeded to in 1638. The plant was given the botanical name *Aster tradescantii*. Since then many hybrids have followed.

Like the daisy (*Bellis perennis*), michaelmas-daisy has also been interrogated in England with regard to partners in a future marriage. The petals are removed one by one while reciting the words

He loves me  
and for the next petal  
                  He loves me not  
and so on until the last petal that provides the answer.