

Zizia aurea
(Common) Golden-alexanders

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

Although tiny, the flowers of Golden-alexanders serve an out-sized role in spring and early summer as a nectar source for short-tongued beneficial insects when other flowers may be in short supply. Named North Carolina Wildflower of the Year in 2012, this dainty, carefree native* creates colonies in moist fields, floodplain forests, and riversides but can range into drier habitats.



Perennial	En Masse, Flowers, Foliage, Fruit
Height: 1½–3 feet	
Spread: 1½–2 feet	
Bloom Color: Yellow	
Characteristics	
Short-lived, herbaceous perennial with outwardly angled or erect stems & semi-evergreen basal leaves	
Alternate , toothed, ovate to lanceolate leaves, 2x/3x compound in groups of 3, become smaller with fewer teeth/lobes or shorter petioles climbing hairless stem	
Groups of ~10–21 flowers—with 5 each of sepals , incurved yellow petals , & stamens —in each of ~10–20 umbellets (the central flower nearly sessile) of a flat-topped, compound umbel ; bloom April–May	
Green ovoid schizocarp turns light purple and splits into two mericarps each containing a seed	
Can reseed heavily in optimum conditions	
Attributes	
Tolerates dry soil, light shade under trees; no serious pests or diseases; deer seldom severely damage	
Good cut flowers; ethnobotanic medicinal uses	
Attracts bees, wasps, flies, beetles, butterflies; larval host to ~3 lepidopterans including Black Swallowtail	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Average, well-drained	<i>Daucus carota</i> - Queen Anne’s Lace
Light Requirements : Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> - Fennel
Water Requirements : Moist, Wet	<i>Melilotus officinalis</i> - Yellow Clover
Foliage may wane as summer advances	*In the Mid-Atlantic, it is native to DC and rare in the DE Piedmont and absent in its Coastal Plain. It is observed mostly in MD’s Howard and Montgomery counties and is present throughout PA. In VA, it is frequent in the mountains; infrequent in the Piedmont; and rare in the Coastal Plain.
Use in naturalized areas and cutting & rain gardens	
Hardiness : USDA Zones 3a–8b	

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Mary Free, Green Spring and Glencarlyn Library Community Gardens and by Elaine Mills (foliage and fruit), private garden, Arlington, VA



Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

