

# Helenium autumnale

*North American Native*



## *Helenium*

(he-le-nee-um) from the Greek *helonion*, after Helen of Troy.

## *autumnale*

(ow-tum-nah-lee)  
meaning of autumn.



**Zones:** 3 – 8 **Flower Color:** Yellow **Height:** 3 – 5' **Spacing:** 24"

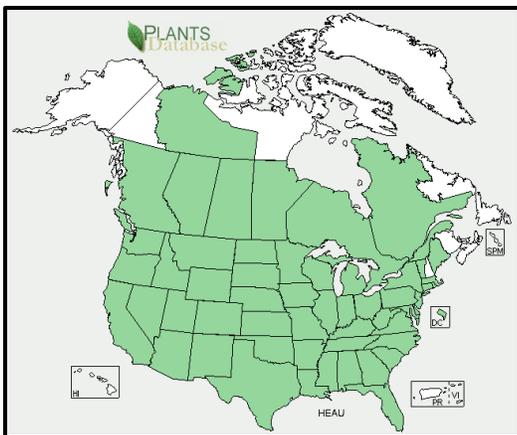


## About the Species:

**Common Name:** Sneezeweed, Helen's Flower

**Family:** Asteraceae

The flowers consist of a yellow ray and a dull yellow center disk, blooming in late summer. The yellow ray petals have distinct tooth-like indentations that lead to one of its common names, the Dog-toothed daisy. A brown-rust colored fruit appears in the fall. *Heleniums* are great for cut flowers, butterfly gardens, containers, meadows, borders, wildflower gardens, and are considered a natural repellent for rabbits. They prefer even moisture but will tolerate periods of drought. Plants may be cut back after flowering or cutting back in early spring will encourage more branching and flowering.



USDA Plants Database

## ACHOO!

*Helenium autumnale's* leaves were dried and crushed to be used as snuff. Snuff was inhaled to cause sneezing in the belief that sneezing would rid the body of evil spirits and clear the mind. In 17th century Europe, sneezing was considered the right thing to do in good society. In fact, the more you sneezed, the more you proved yourself a member of the privileged class. Everyone who was someone started to carry with them a little box containing a mixture of sneeze-producing herbs or tobacco. By drawing a pinch of it into the nostrils, a hearty sneeze resulted. As only the rich and idle had time to sneeze or could afford snuff, self-induced sneezing became synonymous with aristocratic living. Sneezing became a part of men's conversation. You indulged in it whenever you wanted to show your disapproval of anything said or show a lack of interest in the matter being discussed. A sneeze was an unmistakable way of saying politely "you bore me". Anything "not to be sneezed at" was something really worthwhile. In Ancient Greece, sneezes were believed to be prophetic signs from the gods. One superstition was that a sneeze could either release one's soul or that evil spirits could enter the body during the sneeze. Alternatively, the individual was believed to be sneezing out sins or evil spirits. The response of "God Bless You" or "Gesundheit", (the German word for "healthiness"), became a blessing to prevent possible trouble. An idea "Not to be sneezed at".

**Habitat:** Sneezeweed grows natively in moist soils along streams, ponds or ditches and in spring-fed meadows, prairies, and wet open ground.