



meadow zizia

Zizia aptera, (A. Gray) Fernald

Alternate Common Name(s)

heart-leaved golden alexanders, heartleaf golden alexanders, heart-leaved alexanders, heart-leaved meadow parsnip, meadow parsnip, zizia

Scientific Synonym(s)

Zizia aptera (A. Gray) Fernald var. *occidentalis* Fernald, *Zizia cordata* W.D.J. Koch ex DC

Functional Group

forbs (wildflowers)

Family

carrot and parsley family (Apiaceae)

Description

- » **Life cycle/growth form:** Perennial with a central taproot.
- » **Height:** 1-3 ft
- » **Leaves and stem:** Basal and lower leaves are heart shaped (upper leaves 3-lobed) with long petioles, finely toothed margins, and a purple spot where the blade meets the petiole; leaves dark green, smooth and glossy; stems smooth, round, branched.
- » **Flower:** Flowers yellow, 1/8 in wide, with 5 petals that fold inwards; in compound umbels 1 1/2 to 3 in wide, each containing 7 to 15 small umbels with around 10-20 flowers each.
- » **Fruit/seed head:** Fruit is dark reddish brown with lighter brown ribs (not winged) and splits into two parts, each one-seeded.
- » **Pollination:** Insects, particularly small bees, flies, and beetles (including weevils).



Habitat and Range



Dry to moist soil; partial to full sun; prairies, bluffs, roadsides, woodland openings, shorelines, abandoned fields; Wetland Indicator Status is Facultative Upland (FACU) for the Midwest; well-drained loamy soils are

recommended for seed production.

Conservation Status

Global- G5, secure; Rhode Island- SH, possibly extirpated; Connecticut, Delaware, Nevada, and Oregon- S1, critically imperiled; Michigan and Arkansas- S1/S2, critically imperiled to imperiled; Colorado- S2, imperiled; Indiana, Iowa, and Wyoming- S3, vulnerable; in all other states within its natural range, status is S4 (apparently secure) to S5 (secure) or unranked (NatureServe).

General Comments

The yellow umbellate flower heads of meadow zizia (*Zizia aptera*) closely resemble those of their cousin golden Alexanders (*Z. aurea*), but meadow zizia plants (also called heart-leaf Alexanders) have distinctive, heart-shaped lower leaves, generally occupy drier, more open habitats, and bloom a couple of weeks earlier in the spring. The early flowering time makes this species an important option for pollinator plantings, and their short stature may make these plants of interest for plantings in solar installations. The plants are long-lived in production plots and fairly trouble-free, but seed production declines after the first few years.

Establishment for Seed Production (Appendix A)

Direct seeding:

We do not have experience with direct seeding this species for seed production.

Greenhouse:

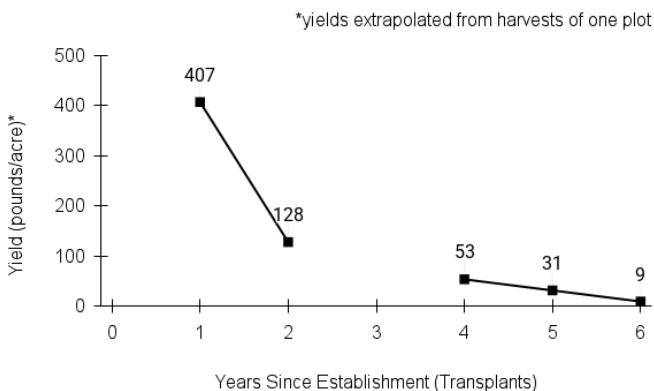
- » **Seed pre-treatment:** Seeds have underdeveloped embryos, and a lengthy cold/moist stratification (150 days) improves germination by providing time for embryos to develop while chemical changes also occur in the seed to reduce inhibition of germination.
- » **Sowing:** Sow in greenhouse, lightly covered with germination mix, about 2-3 months before the last frost. Seed germinates best at cooler temperatures (65-70°F, 18-21°C).
- » **Transplanting:** When seedlings form well-rooted plugs, move them outside to harden off, then transplant into prepared plasticulture beds at 8-12 in spacing.

Stand Management

- » **Weeds:** Plants are short-statured and vulnerable to competition from weeds. Prepare a clean, weed-free bed and use plastic mulch to suppress weeds in the first year or two. Mow or cultivate between rows. Hand weed or rogue to remove large or competitive weeds.
- » **Pests:** Aphids may infest the seed heads in large aggregations. While inspecting a plot *Z. aptera*, we have often observed several ebony bugs (genus *Corimelaena*) within a single developing seedhead. We suspect that these insects may reduce the yield of viable seed.
- » **Diseases:** None noted.

Seed Production (Appendix B)

- » **First harvest:** Plants flower and set seed the year after planting. Peak harvest in our plot was also the first harvest.
- » **Yield:** 50-400 pounds per acre (yields extrapolated from harvests of one plot at TPC)
- » **Stand life:** Plants are long-lived, but yields declined after peak harvest in year 2.
- » **Flowering date:** late April to early June in northern Iowa
- » **Seed maturity/Harvest date:** early to late August in northern Iowa
- » **Seed retention:** Fairly low risk of shattering.
- » **Harvest date range at TPC (2015-2021):** August 1 - August 28
- » **Recommended harvest method:** Hand pick or combine, depending on the size of planting and presence/absence of weed seeds that could contaminate the seedlot.



Seed Cleaning Process (Appendix C)

Pass harvested material through 1/4 in mesh to remove larger particles, then airscreen.

Seed Characteristics (Appendix D)



30-50% RH)

- » **Typical seed test:**
 - PLS: 94% (n = 10)
 - Purity: 100% (n = 10)
 - Germination: 4% (n = 9)
 - Dormancy: 73% (n = 9)

(averages obtained from n tests of purchased seed lots)

Released Germplasm

- » **Source Identified material:** Natural Selections/Iowa Ecotype Zone 1 (northern Iowa)

References

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Species Updated: 01/05/2026

Notes

