

Echinacea purpurea - Purple Coneflower



Native to the prairies and open woods of the eastern and central United States, purple coneflower is a shrubby, drought-tolerant perennial, growing 2-4 feet tall and 2 feet wide. Single, pink purple ray flowers, often reflexed, surround bronze orange cone centers. Plants bloom in midsummer and continue to bloom sporadically until frost. Seed heads remain on the plant through fall into winter and are most attractive when covered with frost or snow. If not removed, seed heads will self-sow. *Echinacea* is closely related to the genus *Rudbeckia*, which has yellow and orange coneflowers, and often has been classified with *Rudbeckia*.

Hardy to USDA zone 3 (-40 degrees F), purple coneflower grows best in average, loamy, moist soil in sun to part shade. Plants do not benefit from increased soil fertility as this will make plants leggy and necessitate staking. Purple coneflower is very drought-tolerant since its taproot is able to store water for spells of dry weather. Plants grow into broad clumps but division is not recommended. Instead, allow space for growth when planting. Deadhead spent flowers to encourage new bloom. Do not deadhead after September, allowing seed heads to remain for the birds. Bloom time can be extended by pruning back selective plants by one foot in early July. These plants then will bloom two to three weeks later.

A highly recommended plant for rain gardens and moist to wet meadows, purple coneflower is a good cut flower. Butterflies and hummingbirds enjoy the nectar of plant flowers and goldfinches and juncos eat plant seeds from late summer into fall. Purple coneflower attracts beneficial soldier beetles in late August. Plants are deer resistant.