

Purple Coneflower

Purple coneflower is the common name for *Echinacea purpurea*. Other common names given to *Echinacea purpurea* are hedge coneflower, hedgehog coneflower, black sampson, purple echinacea, purple rudbeckia, snakeroot, scurvy root, Indian head, comb flower and black susan. There are nine species of *Echinacea*, all native to central and eastern North America. However, only *Echinacea purpurea* is extensively cultivated.

Purple coneflower is a perennial herb from the aster family, hardy in zones 3-9. It is 2'-3' tall, blooms in mid-summer and continues to flower sporadically until frost. This large daisy-like flower has a dark purple cone center with reddish purple petals. The dark green leaves are alternate, simple and ovate. The roots are fibrous and produce woody rhizomes. It is cultivated for its showy flowers and medicinal uses.

Purple coneflower is grown by seed or cutting. No seed treatment is required before sowing; seeds germinate in 10-20 days. It prefers full sun and well-drained soil.

Fall is the best time for planting. Space plants 1'-2' apart to provide good air circulation. Apply 3" of organic mulch around them to control weeds and retain moisture. Water moderately; once established, it is drought tolerant. Purple coneflower is not a heavy feeder. Fertilize lightly before the leaves appear in spring to maintain plant vigor. The sturdy stems do not require staking.

Butterflies and bees are attracted to the nectar. Delay deadheading; leave the seeds in winter as food for goldfinches. Remove dead foliage and stems in spring. Divide purple coneflowers every 3-4 years in fall or spring to prevent overcrowding.

Echinacea purpurea is not affected by any serious diseases. Leaf spot or flower blight may occur after an extended period of wet weather. Good cultural practices and sanitation help to reduce disease and insect damage. Aphids can be treated with insecticidal soap and horticultural oil. Purple coneflower is deer resistant but not rabbit resistant. Hot pepper wax spray can deter leaf damage by rabbits.

http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/pur_coneflowerx.htm

Checklist for September

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Continue treating rose diseases and dispose of all debris. To ensure resistance to winter damage, allow the last flowers to set seeds (hips).
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS944>
- ✓ Ensure houseplants are pest-free before taking them indoors.
- ✓ Divide spring-blooming perennials and plant new perennials.
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/perennials/>
- ✓ Dig up and cure tender summer bulbs when foliage turns brown. Store in a cool, dry place.
<http://gardening.about.com/od/floweringbulbs/a/StoringBulbs.htm>

Lawn

- ✓ Continue to mow and fertilize lawn.
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS633>
- ✓ Now is the time to finish lawn renovation. See Rutgers Fact Sheets FS108 "**Renovating Your Lawn**" and FS633 "**Fertilizing the Home Lawn**" for additional information.
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS108>
- ✓ Check for your Fall Ocean County Household Hazardous Waste Day schedule at 1-800-55RECYCLE or (732) 506-5047 or online at www.co.ocean.nj.us/SolidWaste to dispose of pesticides and other waste.

