

***Echinacea*, Colorful Coneflowers**

Echinacea are a group of easy-care deciduous perennials, native to the Central and Eastern United States. The name *Echinacea* comes from the Greek term echinos (hedgehog) and refers to the spiky nature of the cone at the center of the flower.

Echinacea plants have ovate, dark green leaves with hairy stems. The native plants have daisy-like flowers with gold centers and downward-drooping petals in purple, pink or yellow. Some newer cultivars have horizontally held petals or petals in shades of white, orange or red. Flowers bloom from mid-summer to fall. The flowers attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies while dried seed heads provide food for birds in the fall and winter.

One of the most popular species is *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower). *E. purpurea* prefers full sun but will grow in partial shade. Plant in well-drained soil with a pH of 6.5-7. These perennials are drought tolerant once established, have low fertilizer requirements and are seldom severely damaged by deer. Plants grow 1-5 ft tall and spread 1-2 ft. Divide plants every 3-5 years to maintain plant vigor. To maximize bloom time, cut back some plants in early summer to promote fall flowering. Use fresh or dried flowers in arrangements.

A large number of cultivars are available. The Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware conducted a three-year trial of 75 species and cultivars of *Echinacea*. Here are some of their top picks:

Cultivar	Height (ft)	Flower Color	Notes
'Pica Bella'	1.5-3	Deep pink	Pollinator favorite
'Sensation Pink'	1.5-2	Neon pink	Dark stems; pollinator favorite
'Santa Fe'	2	Coral-red	Blooms fade to shades of pink
Kismet® Raspberry	3	Raspberry-pink	Pollinator favorite
'Glowing Dream'	1-2	Pink-purple	Long blooming; pollinator favorite
'Fragrant Angel'	2-3	White	Large blooms; horizontal petals; pollinator favorite

Checklist for July

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Check containers and hanging baskets daily for water needs.
- ✓ Pinch back ends of leggy basket plants.
- ✓ Apply a slow-release fertilizer to encourage annuals to continue blooming.
- ✓ Water early in the morning when little water is lost to evaporation. Use soaker hoses around plantings to reduce water use by 25-50%.
- ✓ Prune and fertilize climbing roses after bloom. [Rutgers Fact Sheet FS944](#) "Roses and Their Care."
- ✓ Monitor vegetables for symptoms of blight or fungus.

Trees and Shrubs

- ✓ Maintain a 3 in. mulch layer around trees and shrubs.
- ✓ Consider drip irrigation and soaker hoses with timers for efficient watering practices.
- ✓ Monitor all plants for insect damage. Sunny, hot weather may add stress.

Lawn

- ✓ Wait until fall to fertilize. [Rutgers Fact Sheet FS102](#) "Your Lawn and Its Care."