



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Echinacea purpurea¹

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Introduction

Formerly known as *Rudbeckia purpurea* Purple Coneflower displays wonderful daisy-like, pink flowers on top of strong, hairy stems that stand against the wind and rain (Fig. 1). Flowers stand 2- to 4-feet-tall, well above the medium-green foliage. The large flowers have a dark purple center with a variety of outer-flower colors from pink, lavender to purple. Flowers appear in spring and summer in central Florida and in the summer elsewhere in the eastern U.S. There is nothing quite like a Purple Coneflower in bloom.

General Information

Scientific name: *Echinacea purpurea*

Pronunciation: eck-kin-NAY-see-uh pur-PURE-ee-uh

Common name(s): Purple Coneflower

Family: *Compositae*

Plant type: herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 10 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to Florida

Uses: naturalizing; cut flowers; edging; attracts butterflies; mass planting

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 1. Purple Coneflower.

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: oval; upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** serrate
- Leaf shape:** lanceolate
- Leaf venation:** pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** pink; lavender; purple
- Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; spring flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** unknown
- Fruit length:** unknown
- Fruit cover:** unknown
- Fruit color:** unknown
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
- Current year stem/twig color:** green
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
- Soil tolerances:** well-drained; occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; loam; clay
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The stiff appearance of Purple Coneflower contrasts well with the softness of other perennials and other fine-textured plants. The plant attracts much attention due to the wonderful flower and makes a nice component in a mixed perennial border. It is especially useful in light shade in summer, where protection from afternoon sun enhances flower and foliage color. It is fairly tolerant of drought in the partial shade, less so in full sun.

Clumps of Purple Coneflower should be divided every few years to help keep plants blooming. Growers also propagate by root cuttings. Coneflowers with white flowers also exist.

Roots have been used to treat rabbies, snakebites, skin diseases and other ailments.

Pests and Diseases

Purple Coneflower can be moderately to severely infested with Sweetpotato whitefly.

Japanese beetle in northern gardens eat foliage and disfigure plants. Leaf spots can be a problem any place the plant is grown.