Echinacea purpurea Purple Coneflower

Edward F. Gilman

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 and 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)

Description
Height: 1 to 3 feet
Spread: 2 to 3 feet
Plant habit: oval; upright
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: coarse

Figure 1. Purple coneflower.

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

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**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 rabies, snakebites, skin diseases, and other ailments.

**Pests and Diseases**

Purple coneflower can be moderately to severely infested with sweet potato whitefly.

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