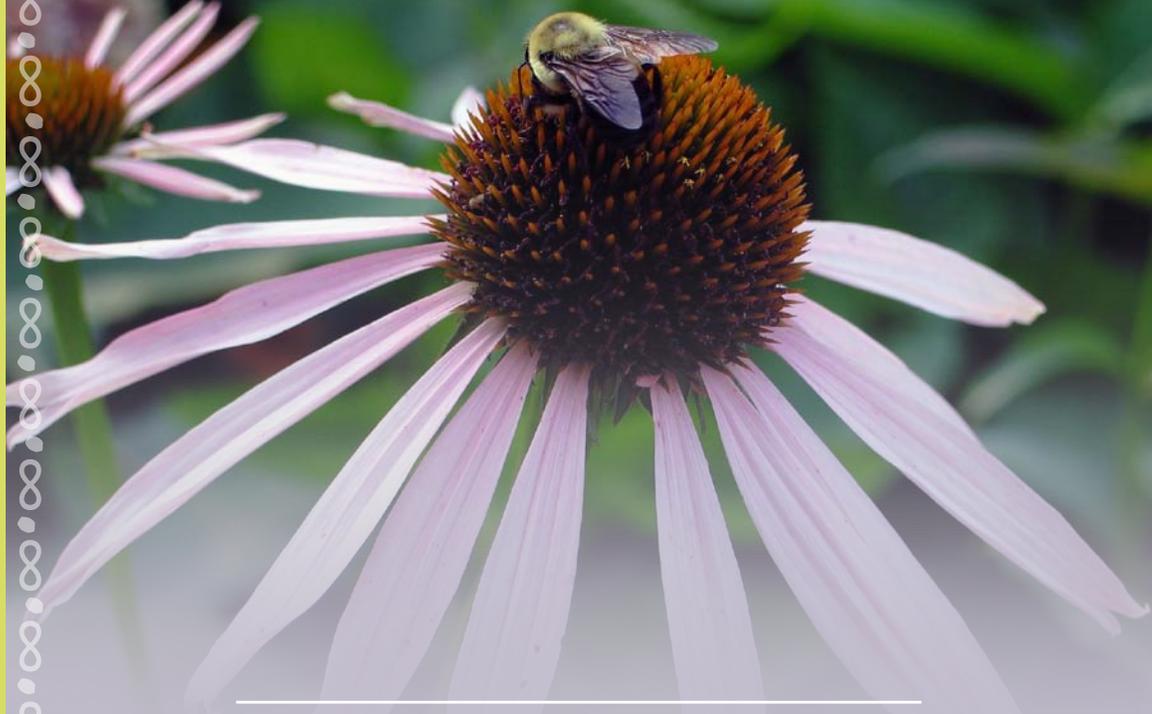


# Purple Coneflowers



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purple  
coneflowers  
for the  
Mississippi  
gardener

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# Purple Coneflowers

Purple coneflowers can really make a statement in the home garden and landscape. The name is derived from the beautiful flowers, with their purple petals and dark center cones. The foliage color can range from pale to dark green. Purple coneflowers are fantastic butterfly-attracting plants.

Purple coneflowers are members of the Genus *Echinacea*. *Echinacea* is derived from the Greek word “echinos,” meaning hedgehog, which refers to the spiny seed heads.

There are nine species of coneflower native to North America. Members of this group can be found from the Gulf of Mexico to beyond the Canadian border. Many evolved in the Midwestern prairies and are adapted to the heat and frequent droughty conditions. Others evolved in the moist woodlands east of the Mississippi River.

# Coneflowers

## Cultural Information

Purple coneflowers are relatively easy to grow in our Mississippi gardens and landscapes. Purple coneflowers don't require much maintenance at all; in fact, they thrive on neglect.

Planting site selection is an important consideration when growing purple coneflowers. For best flowering performance, plant in full sun to partial shade.

Once established in the landscape, purple coneflowers are drought-tolerant plants. These flowering perennials prefer a well-drained soil amended with a good quality compost or organic matter. Planting in berms or raise beds will help water drain away from the crowns. Don't bury the crown of the plant below the grade of the surrounding soil. This can lead to crown rot. Growing in large containers is an excellent way to improve drainage. Be sure to use commercial potting media in containers.

Each spring, feed your purple coneflower plants with a liberal sprinkling of either a balanced, controlled-release fertilizer or a high-quality compost. Fertilizing or composting will both build a better soil and feed the plants. Be careful when applying any type of mulching materials. Excess mulch can hold moisture against the crown. When mulching coneflowers, pull the mulch away from the crown after application.

Deadheading will encourage reblooming well into fall and improve the appearance of the planting bed. Leaving any seed heads at the end of the season will provide winter food for birds and some reseeding the next year.

## propagation

Purple coneflowers can be propagated either by division or seed. Division of the crown can be performed every three to four years. The clumps should be divided in the spring as new growth is emerging. Each crown division should have a shoot and roots attached.

Purple coneflowers will readily grow from seed. A short period (about 30 to 90 days) of cool, moist stratification can help ensure even germination. Sowing coneflower seed in small pots in the fall and leaving the pots outside is an easy way to stratify. When the seedlings have two or three sets of leaves the following spring, they can be transplanted.

purple coneflowers are relatively easy to grow in our Mississippi gardens and landscapes.

# Characteristics of Echinacea species native to North America

## NARROW-LEAF PURPLE CONEFLOWER

*Echinacea angustifolia*

GROWTH HABIT: up to 2 feet tall, upright

FOLIAGE: all parts very hairy

FLOWERS: short, light pink to purple petals, profoundly reflexed, bright orange and brown centers

BLOOM PERIOD: June to July, then sporadic

NATIVE RANGE: prairies from Texas to Canadian border

Compact growth habit, flowers displayed high above foliage



LARRY K. ALLAIN @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



## TOPEKA PURPLE CONEFLOWER

*Echinacea atrorubens*

GROWTH HABIT: up to 3 feet tall

FOLIAGE: light green, very hairy, coarse

FLOWERS: lavender to dark purple, thin, fine textured, and strongly reflexed

BLOOM PERIOD: April to June, then sporadic

NATIVE RANGE: small, localized areas in Oklahoma and Kansas

MRS. W.D. BRANSFORD, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

## SMOOTH PURPLE CONEFLOWER

*Echinacea laevigata*

GROWTH HABIT: up 4 feet tall, rosette forming with few leaves

FLOWERS: light pink to light purple, dark purple centers, petals reflexed

BLOOM PERIOD: May to June, then sporadic

NATIVE RANGE: local regions in VA, NC, SC, and GA

Plant is on the Federal Endangered Species List



J.S. PETERSON @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



**PALE PURPLE  
CONEFLOWER**  
*Echinacea pallida*

**GROWTH HABIT:** up to 3 feet tall

**FOLIAGE:** dark green, smooth margins, up to 10 inches long, coarse, very hairy

**FLOWERS:** very pale pink, orangey/brown centers, petals thin and extremely reflexed

**BLOOM PERIOD:** May to July, then sporadic

**NATIVE RANGE:** wide areas of the Eastern U.S.



**EASTERN PURPLE  
CONEFLOWER**  
*Echinacea purpurea*

**GROWTH HABIT:** up to 3 feet tall, some greater than 4 feet

**FOLIAGE:** dark green with coarse, serrated margins, up to 8 inches

**FLOWERS:** large and daisy-like, light pink to deep magenta, bright orange centers; many white-flowered, double flowered, or novelty flowered selections available

**BLOOM PERIOD:** June through August, then sporadic

**NATIVE RANGE:** wide areas of the Eastern US

Rare in Mississippi

The most readily available coneflower in the trade



**WAVY LEAVED  
PURPLE CONEFLOWER**  
*Echinacea simulata*

**GROWTH HABIT:** up to 3 feet tall

**FOLIAGE:** narrow, dark green, up to 10 inches long

**FLOWERS:** drooping pale pink petals with copper-orange centers

**BLOOM PERIOD:** June to July, then sporadic

**NATIVE RANGE:** IL, MO, KY, TN, NC, AL, GA

Plant is on the Federal Threatened Species List

Closely related to *E. pallida*. Only appreciable difference is color of the pollen. 'Simulata' refers to this resemblance.

**YELLOW PURPLE  
CONEFLOWER**  
*Echinacea paradoxa*

**GROWTH HABIT:** : up to 3½ feet tall

**FOLIAGE:** stems and leaves smooth, unlike other *Echinacea* species

**FLOWERS:** shades of yellow and yellow-orange, reflexed petals, large chocolate brown centers

**BLOOM PERIOD:** June to July, then sporadic

**NATIVE RANGE:** TX, OK, AR

Only *Echinacea* species with yellow flowers, hence the paradox suggested in the species name



**SANGUIN PURPLE  
CONEFLOWER**  
*Echinacea sanguinea*

**GROWTH HABIT:** up to 3 feet tall, rosette forming

**FOLIAGE:** leaves up to 10 inches long, leaves and stems coarsely hairy, stem sways easily

**FLOWERS:** light pink, thin, almost frail reflexed petals, dark blood red center

**BLOOM PERIOD:** May to June, then sporadic

**NATIVE RANGE:** coastal plains to western Gulf of Mexico



Most southerly species, least cold-hardy *Echinacea*

**TENNESSEE PURPLE  
CONEFLOWER**  
*Echinacea tennesseensis*

**GROWTH HABIT:** up to 2 feet tall

**FOLIAGE:** linear, coarse

**FLOWERS:** dark mauve with green-pink centers; petals turn upwards (only coneflower with this characteristic)

**BLOOM PERIOD:** June to August, then sporadic

**NATIVE RANGE:** three-county area around Nashville, TN

Plant is on the Federal Endangered Species List





## Landscape Uses

The coneflowers included in this publication can be grown and enjoyed in Mississippi. These plants can be incorporated into the landscape or garden in many ways. Because these coneflowers are native wildflowers in Mississippi, they are at home in a naturalized wildflower garden or area. Purple coneflowers can also be part of a more formal perennial flower border. Because they are drought tolerant, they would be an excellent choice in a large container for those who sometimes forget to water. In landscape plantings, good companion plants include ornamental grasses, Autumn Joy sedum, rudbeckias, Mexican bush sage (*Tagetes lucida*), dusty miller or lamb's ear.

Although purple coneflowers are native and among our favorite garden plants we should make a few concessions in regard to garden and landscape performance. Think of purple coneflowers in Mississippi as short-lived flowering perennials. In other words, don't feel guilty if these plants vanish after a few years. This usually happens due to the cool, damp weather typical of Mississippi winters, which can result in crown rot. This disease is a major problem of purple coneflowers if the soil is too wet. Planting in raised beds, on a slope, or in containers can help but is not a guarantee of survival.

These wonderful plants usually perform and flower well for up to 12 weeks or longer in the heat and humidity of summer, but you may have to replace them eventually. When you do, consider trying some of the new cultivars pictured below.

## Pests

Purple coneflowers have few pests, but spittlebugs can be a problem in the spring and summer when the flower buds are starting to form. More information on insect pests of perennials can be found in Extension Publication 2369, "Insect Pests of Perennial Plants In the Home Landscape," available at <http://msucares.com/pubs/publications/p2369.pdf>.

Sometimes aster yellows occur in large plantings. Aster yellows is a virus transmitted by leaf hoppers. Symptoms include mottling of the foliage. The flowers will start to exhibit a deformation of the flower buds. Sometimes the plant will outgrow the virus the following year. A common control practice is to remove and destroy the infected plants. Never put infested plant material into your compost pile.

## Herbal Supplement Use

There is much interest in using *Echinacea* in herbal remedies, particularly in those designed to boost the immune system. Three of the native species, *E. augustifolia*, *E. pallida*, and *E. purpurea* are the primary plants of interest. Anyone considering using *Echinacea* or any other herbal supplement should consult a health care professional first to avoid possible serious side effects or interactions with prescription drugs.

## New Introductions

In recent years purple coneflower breeders have introduced many new colors and flower forms, especially double flower forms. Because the flower colors for many of these new plants are a departure from the traditional white or purple flowers, they are referred to by their hybridized name. Some are available at your favorite garden center. Many more are available for order through catalogs or online.

# New Coneflower Selections

## New Colors

*Twilight*



ITSAUL PLANTS, Alpharetta, GA

*Tomato Soup*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

*Sundown*



ITSAUL PLANTS, Alpharetta, GA

*Flame Thrower*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

*Mac n Cheese*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

*Harvest Moon*



ITSAUL PLANTS, Alpharetta, GA

*Green Eyes*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

*Hope*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

Double and novelty flowers

*Pink Poodle*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

*Secret Passion*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

*Quills and Thrills*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

*Secret Joy*



TERRA NOVA NURSERIES, INC., Canby, OR

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Purple  
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Mississippi  
gardens and landscapes.

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**MISSISSIPPI STATE**  
UNIVERSITY™

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