

# Purple Coneflower *Echinacea purpurea*

**Plant Type:** Native Perennial Wildflower

**Sun Exposure:** Full Sun, Part Sun

**Season of Interest:** Summer, Fall

**Bloom Time:** Summer, Fall

**Bloom Color:** Pink to Lavender

**Height:** 36 to 42 in.

**Spread:** 24 in.

**Spacing:** 28 in.

**Water Needs:** Average

**Maintenance:** Very Little

**Soil Type:** Clay, Loam, Sandy

**Soil pH:** Acidic, Neutral

**Soil Drainage:** Well Drained

**Pests:** Deer and Rabbit resistant

**Diseases:** Leaf spot, Aster yellows

**Wildlife:** Bees, Butterflies, Birds



**Description:** Purple coneflowers are quintessential field and meadow plants. Native to eastern North America, they are hardy, drought-tolerant, and long-blooming. It's hard to find a garden without at least one. Started from seeds in early spring (after the final frost), coneflowers will germinate in about three to four weeks and produce leaves in three months but can take up to two years to actually produce blooms. This plant has a fibrous root system, rather than the long taproot and woody crown found in other native species, making it more adaptable to garden conditions, and more forgiving of dividing and transplanting.

The daisy-like blooms are actually made up of several small flowers, with petals that are sterile to lure insects toward the many fertile flowers in the central disk or cone. These flowers are rich in nectar and very popular with both bees and butterflies. Hummingbirds also enjoy coneflowers, and birds like finches eat (and spread) the seeds. For more information see: [plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/echinacea-purpurea](http://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/echinacea-purpurea)

**Care and Growing Tips:** Keep your sunflowers weeded, as weeds not only compete for nutrients but also introduce insect pests that may bring fungal diseases to the flower garden. Combine your fertilizing and watering chores by feeding your sunflowers twice a week with diluted fish emulsion or another balanced flower fertilizer. Small plants only need a couple of gallons of this nourishing drink per week, but as the plants surpass you in height, they will triple their thirst.

When the petals of your sunflowers begin to shrivel, the plant has reached its peak height. Save seeds from the largest several plants, and plant the largest seeds (with the most life-sustaining endosperm) next season to increase your giant sunflower growing success. In this way, you will improve each generation by selecting the largest and most vigorous flowers to replant.

Sunflowers are treasured for their oil-rich seeds, both for animal food and as snacks. When the petals wither and the bloom's beauty has faded, you must protect the developing seeds from hungry scavengers with some fine netting or cheesecloth fastened with a rubber band. When the back of the bloom turns brown the seeds are ready to eat or to store in a cool, dry place for winter bird feeding. Or you can skip the netting and watch the birds eat the seeds directly from the seedhead.

