Growing Echinacea (Coneflower)

Latin Name Pronunciation: ek-in-ay'see-uh

These sturdy perennials bloom from early summer until frost. Butterflies revel in the flowers and the seed heads are beloved of goldfinches. Easy to grow and trouble-free, Coneflowers are at home in the wild garden as well as in the more refined perennial border, and make ideal cut flowers. Please note: So plants may properly establish before winter, we recommend early fall planting of Echinacea in colder zones (Zones 5 and lower).

Light/Watering: Flowering is at its best in full sun, although plants will tolerate light shade. Deep taproots make these plants quite drought-tolerant once established.

Fertilizer/Soil and pH: Applying a couple inches of organic matter, such as compost or well-rotted manure, around the plants in early spring will take care of nutritional needs; no further fertilizing will be necessary. Echinacea purpurea is adaptable to most soil types but prefers a sandy, well-drained loam and a pH from 6.0 to 7.0.

Pests/Diseases: Echinacea is rarely troubled by pests or diseases, none serious enough to warrant control measures. Plants do attract beneficial insects, especially firefly-like soldier beetles, which feed on aphids and caterpillars.

Companions: Shorter perennials camouflage occasional basal legginess; compact varieties of Catmint (Nepeta) are ideal companions as are perennial Geraniums, dwarf Goldenrods (Solidago), and Salvia. Taller companion plants include Perovskia, Phlox, Sedum, Veronica, and Monarda.

Reflowering: Echinacea has a long bloom season even without deadheading, but that practice will result in more blooms. Plants can be cut back by half in early summer, resulting in a later bloom time but more compact form. Leave some seed heads to provide food for goldfinches -- there are few sights more delightful than watching the small, golden birds wave about as they pick out the seeds.

Dividing/Transplanting: Plants rarely need dividing, and transplanting older plants can be tricky due to the taproot. It can be done, however, as long as you dig deeply and keep a good amount of soil around the roots.

End-of-Season Care: Plants may be left standing through winter as the seeds heads collect the snow in pretty little puffs.

Calendar of Care

Early Spring: Divide or transplant now, watering well afterward.

Late Spring: Provide supplementary water only if the season is extremely dry or if the Coneflowers are newly planted.

Summer: Deadhead if desired, but leave some seeds for the goldfinches. Watch for beneficial soldier beetles in August and do not harm them. Plants may be cut back by half in June; this will result in
later-flowering, more compact growth.

**Fall:** A light mulch in colder regions is beneficial.