

Echinacea purpurea- A Show of Color

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Meadow application of *Echinacea purpurea*.

Echinacea purpurea, commonly called purple coneflower, is a popular perennial being highlighted this month for its versatility in the landscape. Coneflower is traditionally known for its long-lasting flower with bold lavender petals and textured central disk. *Echinacea purpurea* is native to the eastern region of the United States and benefits local wildlife. This perennial can be seen in varying applications, from natural meadows to formal urban planting beds. Echinacea can easily be found in nurseries and is offered in a growing variety of color and height options. The expanding options with echinacea create opportunities for more unique planting combinations with other commonly used perennials and shrubs.

Echinacea purpurea is extremely easy to grow from any size. In meadow applications, it can be incorporated in a seed mix and successfully show within the first growing season. It can easily be installed as a landscape plug with little maintenance, which can be cost-effective for larger planting installations. In a natural planting, taller coneflowers like *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus' will reach heights of 3'. These make a great pairing with native grasses like little bluestem and Shenandoah switchgrass, along with other native perennials like rudbeckia. Coneflower is sun loving, and its ability to tolerate partial shade gives it the opportunity to be used in areas around tree canopies and incorporated along the edges of wood lines.



Coneflower with butterfly in late October.

In formal plantings, using massings of coneflower in sunny areas will promote the most successful flowers and growth. Echinacea can be eye catching for planting beds along walkways or building entrances that have a lot of pedestrian circulation. Some of the shorter varieties of coneflower, such as *Echinacea purpurea* 'Kim's Knee High' or any of the echinacea butterfly series will finish off around 18" and can be used to create a layered effect in front of taller perennials and shrubs. Kim's Knee High offers a rosy-pink flower, while the echinacea butterfly series has flower options that come in pink as well as a vibrant orange or a sunny yellow. These dwarf varieties pair great with perennials that have contrasting flowers and foliage shapes, like Baptisia and Hemerocallis. Cheyanne Spirit Coneflower is a favorite that comes in a mix of pinks, yellows, and oranges, and planting in a massing is a great way to incorporate a lot of color with just a single variety. This

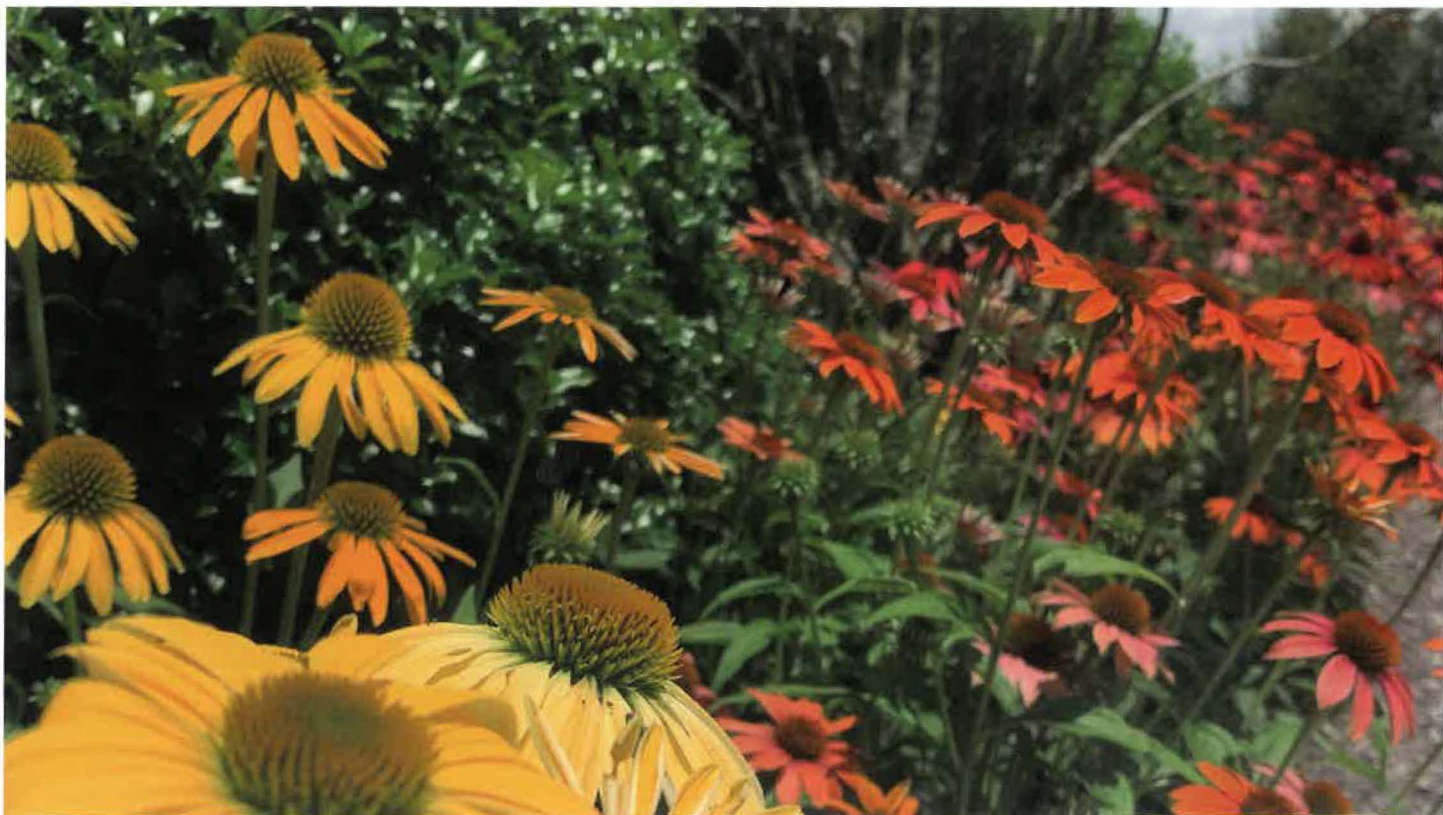
multicolored coneflower can really pop against an evergreen hedge, such as boxwoods or hollies.

In ornamental gardens, where the planting application can be a little looser and whimsical, echinacea can help add texture against very fine grasses and more delicate perennials. A combination of *Echinacea purpurea* 'Powwow Wild Berry' and Mexican Feather Reed create a soft look with a bold purple color. The Powwow Wild Berry Coneflower reaches heights between 20" and 24" and will continually flower from late spring to late summer. This coneflower would also blend nicely with orange flowers like *Asclepias tuberosa* or a blue flowering salvia.

Coneflower is a great perennial to use and maintain on any style property, and its unique leaf and recognizable flower make it easy to identify from weeds. Once flowers start to bloom, coneflowers can continue to produce

multiple flowers on a single stem. Deadheading this perennial is not necessary but can be done to achieve a consistent cleaner look. Leaving the flower heads through the fall and winter can provide seeds and food for native birds like cardinals and goldfinches. Other wildlife, such as butterflies, visit coneflower during the summer months for its sweet nectar. Due to its textured foliage, coneflower tends to be more deer resistant than other perennials. Healthy echinacea groupings can typically be divided and transplanted every two or three years.

Echinacea has proven to be a reliable perennial that can easily add interest to any landscape. Its increasing availability and options in nurseries reflect its success and versatile use. No matter what planting application you are installing or maintaining, if you are looking for that pop of color this summer, adding a few coneflowers can make all the difference. II



Residential application of Echinacea Cheyanne Spirit.