

## Purple Cone Flower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

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This lovely American native has become a garden favorite in the last few decades. And yes, this member of the aster family is also another of our WaterWise garden choices. The photograph shows 'White Swan,' one of the many garden cultivars now available.

Oregon State University's plant identification website <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/echinacea.htm> lists the species as up to 3 feet tall, blooming in July and August. It grows best in full sun and well drained soil. It is also good for cut flowers, and looks especially nice in the back of perennial borders. Purple cone flower attracts butterflies and best of all, it is listed as "trouble free." The website has good pictures and other information as well.

This species is also well known for its medicinal properties, and a plethora of information is available from university sources about these properties and the scientific studies that support them. An advanced Google search will provide this information if you are interested.

In nature, the species has a broad range throughout much of the southeastern eastern United States. It grows successfully in many horticultural zones, ranging from 3 to 8. Flower colors range from the rose-purple of the wild form, to cultivars in white, pink, and intense pinkish-purple. Relatives of the purple coneflower, i.e., other species of *Echinacea*, also include yellow, and are worth trying as a complement to the purple coneflower. This species thrives in poor soil as well.

Propagation is through seed or division at about 3-4 years or longer. Seed is readily available. If you leave the flowers on to go to seed, you will find that it reseeds successfully but not aggressively in the garden.

