

*Echinacea pallida*

[Synonyms : *Brauneria pallida*, *Echinacea angustifolia* var. *strigosa*, *Echinacea pallida* var. *sanguinea*, *Echinacea pallida* var. *strigosa*, *Echinacea sanguinea*, *Rudbeckia pallida*, *Rudbeckia purpurea*]

**PALE PURPLE CONEFLOWER** is a perennial. Native to North America it has drooping lavender flowers.

It is also known as Black sampson, Black Susans, *Blasser Sonnenhut* (German), *Blassrosa Sonnenhut* (German), Combflower, Coneflower, Droop, Echinacea, Hedgehog coneflower, Indian-head, Kansas snakeroot, Niggerhead, Pale coneflower, Pale echinacea, Pale-flowered echinacea, Pale Kansas, Pale purple echinacea, Pink coneflower, *Punahattu* (Finnish), Purple coneflower, Purple daisy, Rattlesnake weed, Red sunflower, *Rohtopäivanhattu* (Finnish), *Rudbeckia* (Swedish), Sanguin purple coneflower, Scurvy root, Snakeroot, and Strigose blacksamson.

The flowers are pollinated by bumble bees and beetles.

*Pallida* is Latin (pale, colourless) with reference to the colour of the flower.

Jugglers in the North American Dakota tribe coated the skin of their hands with the plant juice before handling boiling hot meat, and members of the tribe also used pale purple coneflower to treat distemper in their horses.

The plant was a source of medicine for several North American Indian tribes and is still today for some. It was applied to burns by the Cheyenne and some of the Dakota, and they and the Crow tribe all used the plant to ease toothache. The Crow prescribed this plant for easing indigestion, and they and the Cheyenne chose it for colds. It was a treatment for headaches, eye problems, venomous bites (not least from rattlesnakes) and worms among the Dakota Indians, and records indicate that it was also used by the Cheyenne in remedies for smallpox, measles, mumps, oral problems, boils, fever, rheumatism and arthritis.

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century a Dr. H.C.F. Meyer of Nebraska became especially aware of the wide range of ailments that Indian tribes treated with pale purple coneflower. With this in mind he bottled a tincture of the plant's root and proceeded to travel through the countryside pedalling this as a virtual panacea for curing everything from gangrene to diphtheria. The tincture gained gradual popularity and no amount of disparagement by the American Medical Association prevented its use. In fact it is still valued in folk medicine there to this day and orthodox Western medicine medical research carried out in the late 1980s indicates that this plant and its close relatives do actually have properties that are beneficial in stimulating the immune system.