

Echinacea purpurea

[Synonyms : *Brauneria purpurea*, *Rudbeckia purpurea*]

PURPLE CONEFLOWER is a perennial. Native to eastern North America it has daisy-like, orange-brown centred, crimson-purple (occasionally white) flowers.

It is also known as *Auringonhattu* (Finnish), Black Sampson, Black Samson, Combflower, Coneflower, Cornflower, Eastern purple coneflower, Echinacea (English and German), Hedgehog, Hedgehog coneflower, Missouri coneflower, Niggerhead, Prairie coneflower, *Punahattu* (Finnish), Purple daisy, Purple echinacea, *Purpursonnenhut* (German), Red sunflower, *Röd rudbeckia* (Swedish), *Röd solhatt* (Swedish), Rudbeckia, and *Sonnenhut* (German).

Purpurea is Latin (purple-coloured).

Purple coneflower is also known as Cornflower in the United States (cornflower in Britain is *Centaurea cyanus*).

Excavation of campsites has shown that from at least the 1600s several North American Indian tribes, including the Delaware and Choctaw Indians, sucked on the root of this and other related species as a remedy for various ailments. These included cancer, measles, mumps, coughs, wind, skin disorders, smallpox, snake bites, sore throats, toothache and wounds – and a root infusion was used in the treatment of venereal diseases.

Medicinally, today the fresh root is used for treating skin diseases, wounds and various respiratory ailments. Its popularity is so great that there is some concern that the wild plant could be under threat and efforts are being made to encourage use of only the cultivated root. (This appears to have the same properties as its wild predecessor.) It is understood that studies carried out have supported a belief in purple coneflower's ability to activate the body's immune systems.