

PRAIRIE CONEFLOWER

Ratibida columnifera
(Nutt.) Woot. & Standl.
Plant symbol = RACO3

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Alternate Names

Mexican hat, yellow Mexican hat, upright prairie coneflower, long-head coneflower, columnar prairie coneflower

Uses

Ethnobotanic: Tea was made from the leaves and flower heads. Cheyenne Indians boiled prairie coneflower leaves and stems to make a solution applied externally to draw the poison out of rattlesnake bites. An infusion was used to relieve the pain of headaches and to treat stomachaches and fevers (Moerman 1998). A decoction was used as a wash to relieve pain and to treat poison ivy rash (Ibid.).

Landscaping: Prairie coneflower is suggested for use in roadside plantings, parks, recreational areas and prairie restoration projects; where annual precipitation is from ten to thirty inches. This species is sometimes grown as an ornamental.

Status

Please consult the Plants Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

General: Composite Family (Asteraceae). Prairie coneflower is a native perennial about a foot and a half tall. The rays are generally three to five centimeters long, much longer than the disk (solid part between the rays). The floral disk is somewhat globe-shaped, ovoid, or shortly ellipsoid, twelve to twenty millimeters high (Steyermark 1963). Prairie coneflower has well-developed leaves up to fifteen centimeters long and six centimeters wide, pinnatifid to partly bipinnatifid, with ultimate segments linear to oblong, often very unequal (Great Plains Flora Association 1986). This species has one to several stems twelve to forty-seven inches tall. The fruit is a small ash.

Distribution: Prairie coneflower ranges from Alberta to Mexico, east to Manitoba, Minnesota, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas; and New England (Steyermark 1963). For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

Ratibida columnifera grows well on loam, sandy loam, and clayey loam soils. It prefers a sunny position and well-drained rich soil types. This species is tolerant of weakly acidic to moderately alkaline soils and weak saline soils. It has low to moderate water requirements. Prairie coneflower is found on dry plains, prairies, waste ground, and along roadsides and railroads.

Establishment

Propagation by Seed: *Ratibida columnifera* seeds are best sown in early spring in a cold frame. Cover the seeds and place the pot in a sunny location. Optimum germination temperatures are between 68 to 86°F, or 20 to 30°C. Germination should be achieved in two days.

Management

Prairie coneflower seeds can be planted in the fall. If they are placed in winter storage for spring planting, they should be stratified with a cold dry treatment.

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Available through native plant seed sources specializing in Great Plains species.

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Prepared By

Jammie Favorite

Formerly USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Species Coordinator

Lincoln M. Moore

USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Edited: 08apr02 ahv

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