United States Department of Agriculture
NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service
Plant Guide

CUP PLANT

Silphium perfoliatum L.

plant symbol = SIPE2

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Alternate Names

Carpenter's weed, cup rosinweed, *Silphium perfoliatum* L. var. *connatum* (L.) Cronq. (SIPEC2), *Silphium perfoliatum* L. var. *perfoliatum* (SIPEP)

Uses

Ethnobotanic: Cup plant's young leaves were cooked in the spring as an acceptable green (Kindscher 1987). This species was also used as a chewing gum to help prevent vomiting (Runkel & Roosa 1989). The Winnebagos tribe believed that this species has supernatural powers. They would drink a concoction derived from the rhizome to purify them before going on a buffalo hunt. It is used in the treatment of liver and spleen disorders and has also been used to treat morning sickness (Moerman 1998). A decoction of the root has been used as a face wash and to treat paralysis, back and chest pain, and lung hemorrhages (Ibid.).

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). Cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*) is a tall perennial native that grows up to eight feet tall. This species has square stems and leaves that are mostly opposite, egg-shaped, toothed, with cuplike bases that hold water (Kindscher 1987). The flower heads are rich, golden yellow, 2.5 centimeters in diameter, and closely grouped at the tips of the stems (Hunter 1984). The small, tubular disk flowers are in the middle of the flower and is sterile and does not produce fruits (Ladd, 1995).

Distribution: Cup plant ranges from Ontario to South Dakota, south to Georgia, Mississippi, Missouri, and Oklahoma (Steyermark 1963). For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

Silphium perfoliatum occurs on low ground, in moist areas, along prairie streams, alluvial thickets, floodplains, and along the edges of wet woodlands. This species is found throughout the tall grass region, but more sporadic northward (Ladd 1995).

Establishment

Propagation by Seed: Seeds are best sown as soon as they are ripe in a greenhouse. If the seeds are collected in the fall, they should be stratified for twelve weeks and then sown at 24 to 32ºF for four to eight weeks, and then moved to 68ºF for germination. When the plants are large enough to handle, place them into individual pots and plant them out in the summer.

Management

Silphium perfoliatum species should be transplanted when they are young. This species is much easier when transplanted young because it is very difficult to transplant once it is older due to its extensive root system.

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

Materials are occasionally available through native plant seed sources and nurseries.

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