

NATIVE PERENNIALS

Coneflower, Narrowleaf

Echinacea angustifolia

Native. Attractive flowers with dark brown spiny center and purple, pink, or sometimes white petals. Occurs in fertile prairies, rocky hillsides, and in coarse textured soils. Drought tolerant. Roots sometimes used for medicinal purposes. Also called Black Samson. Grows 1-2 ft. tall.

Description: This warm-season forb grows from an enlarged taproot to produce stiffly erect stems, 1 to 2 feet tall, each capped with a single showy flower head. The flower head disk is dark brown, ½ to 1-1/4 inches across, dome-like, and prickly with sharp-tipped bracts. Rays are rose, purple, or seldom white, ½ to 1-1/2 inches long. Lance-shaped leaves are near the base of the stem. Both leaves and stems are covered with short, stiff hairs. Narrowleaf coneflower flowers during June and July. After rays fall, the black prickly cone remains conspicuous.

Distribution/Habitat: Narrowleaf coneflower is found in the prairies of Saskatchewan and Manitoba and south to Texas. As a Great Plains exclusive, it grows abundantly in the plains and prairies of South Dakota but with a preference for rocky hillsides and weakly developed soils.

Comments: Narrowleaf coneflower, or black Samson, is utilized by most grazing and browsing mammals, large and small, and where abundant it is an indicator of healthy range. When chewed, the root has a numbing, anesthetic effect on the mouth. The root has been widely used by Plains Indians to treat snakebite, stings, toothache, coughs, sore mouth and gums, neck pain, rheumatism, arthritis, mumps and measles, smallpox, boils, and more. The plant was their most important plains herbal medicine. Recent interest in *Echinacea* medicinal and herbal values has resulted in a cottage industry centered around its cultivation. Stands of naturally occurring narrowleaf coneflower have been reduced by root digging. Narrowleaf coneflower is used in prairie restoration and as garden ornamentals.

Credit: James E. Johnson & Gary E. Larson, Grassland Plants of South Dakota and the Northern Great Plains. SDSU, Brookings, SD. B-566 (rev.) August 1999. Page 114.

Photo Credit: Big Sioux Nursery, Inc., Watertown, SD & USDA/NRCS Plants Database



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