

NATIVE PERENNIALS

Mexican Hat

Ratibida columnifera 'Red'

Native. Formerly called Coneflower, Prairie 'Upright Red'. Produces blood red flowers in late summer and early fall. Drooping petals surround an upright central cone. Very similar to 'Upright Yellow' coneflower. Can grow to 4 ft. with good moisture and little competition.

Description: The genus *Ratibida* is distinguished from other coneflowers by the cylindrical disk of the lower head. Showy yellow rays tend to droop. Flowering is June to September. Leaves are mostly deeply pinnately divided. Prairie coneflower usually grows 12 to 36" tall from a stout taproot. The disk is distinctly columnar, up to 1-3/4" long, with rays about 1" long. Leaves are up to 6" long and divided into 5 to 9 segments.

Distribution/Habitat: Prairie coneflower is native from Canada's prairie provinces, the Great Plains, and Rocky Mountain states to northeast Mexico. It is sometimes abundant in plains and prairies of the northern Great Plains, including South Dakota.

Comments: Prairie coneflower is palatable to stock and wildlife, especially when plants are young. Depending on local conditions, prairie coneflower may decrease or increase with grazing pressure. Dakota and Lakota made a tea to cure aches of stomach, head or side. Dakota also made a leaf tea beverage. Cheyenne prepared a solution for relieving the effects of rattlesnake bite and poison ivy. A yellow dye was also made. The plant was fed to horses when they could not urinate. Prairie coneflower is widely marketed for prairie restoration and as a garden ornamental. A dark red phase is marketed as 'Mexican Hat.'

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 132.

Photo Credit: Big Sioux Nursery, Inc., Watertown, SD

