

Canada Agriculture and Food Museum

The purple coneflower



Do you know what the purple coneflower is? It is a plant that produces pretty purple flowers. Its centre looks like a porcupine. That's where the flower secretes a sweet liquid called nectar. Some insects, including bees and monarch butterflies, feed on coneflower nectar. So do hummingbirds!

The purple coneflower loves dry, sunny gardens. It doesn't need much attention, and spreads through its seeds. Coneflower seeds can only germinate in the spring, because they need the cold days of winter to break their dormancy. It is as though the cold wakes them up.



The purple coneflower is a perennial. This means that it lives for several years, and doesn't die in the winter. In the fall, the leaves and stem dry out, but deep in the earth, the roots are still alive. In the spring, new stems grow and the plant comes back to life.

The purple coneflower, also known as *Echinacea purpurea*, is a medicinal plant, which means that it is often grown to make medicines. It can help fight a cold.

1. What does the centre of the purple coneflower look like?

2. Name three creatures from the animal kingdom that feed on purple coneflower nectar.

3. Why do purple coneflower seeds only germinate in the spring?

4. What part of the purple coneflower doesn't die in the winter?

5. Why is the purple coneflower grown?



This lesson plan was produced by the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum.

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