

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 57

Echinacea purpurea 'Magnus'

Description

Echinacea purpurea 'Magnus' (purple coneflower) is an upright, clump-forming perennial. The leaves are medium to dark green with a coarse-toothed margin up to 6 inches long.

Unlike the species, 'Magnus' petals remain horizontal rather than drooping and are carmine instead of purple and white. The average height of 'Magnus' is about 80 to 150 cm.

History

A member of the *Asteracea* family, also known as the sunflower family, the purple coneflower originates in the mid-western plains of North America.

It was selected at the nursery of Magnus Nilsson in Sweden. Nilsson hybridized the plant to attain the characteristics that he desired, such as the strong carmine colors and the more horizontal petal stature.

Klaus Jelitto then introduced it to the perennial trade and brought it to fame.

Propagation

Propagation methods include seeding (the most common), herbaceous cuttings and root cuttings or division.

Sow seeds at 20 to 24° C. Keep the soil moist but not wet, and to maintain humidity, cover the seeds with a polyethylene bag. To ensure germination, cover the seed with a non-transparent covering to keep light out.

In about 10 to 21 days, germination takes place. As seedlings grow, they will require cooler temperatures and then acclimatization to outdoor conditions.

Culture

'Magnus' performs best in sun or partial shade. The plant is able to withstand dry conditions due to the development of an extensive taproot system. Therefore, it needs a location with good drainage because it cannot tolerate overly moist conditions.

Use a fertilizer with equal parts of N-P-K (e.g., 10-10-10) in the spring and summer. To prolong flowering of 'Magnus,' cut off the flowering stalks as the petals fade.

Uses

Among the uses of the purple coneflower are the following:

- attracts butterflies and birds
- is suitable for natural gardens (meadows and prairie gardens) and mid- to back-border settings
- can be used as a specimen plant or in masses
- has a long mid-summer bloom
- makes an excellent cut flower
- has petals and "cones" useful in wreaths, flower arrangements and other crafts
- can boost the immune system and prevent colds
- can be used in teas and pills

Ailments

Echinacea is not commonly subject to many pests or diseases. Some common diseases include fungal leaf spots, viruses, mites, aphids and thrips.

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