



ECHINACEA

Latin: *Echinacea purpurea*

Echinacea is native to North America. It is also known as the Purple Coneflower.

The roots, seeds and leaves of Echinacea were used medicinally by Native American Indians to treat infections, rheumatism, rattlesnake bites (as an antidote) and bee stings. It was also used as a local anaesthetic to relieve toothache, headache etc.

The Cheyenne chewed the root to stimulate saliva and to quench thirst. Tincture of Echinacea was long used in folk medicine to ward off infection, and it is now known that the dried rootstock of the plant does have antiseptic properties.

The generic name of this attractive plant derives from the Greek *echinos* (hedgehog), a derivation which reflects the conical seed head with its prickly bracts.

The plant became known to European botanists in the late C17th. Robert Morison (1620-83), the first professor of Botany at Oxford University, was a pioneer in the systematic classification of plants. In his *Plantarum Historiae Universalis Oxoniensis* a plant listed as 'Bite of the Devil' has been identified as the Purple Coneflower.

Carl Linnaeus (1707-78) named the plant *Rudbeckia* after his fellow botanist Olaf Rudbeck, but it was later placed in the genus *Echinacea*.