

BWSR Featured Plant

Name: Green-headed coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*)

Plant family: *Asteraceae* (Aster)

Right: Green-headed coneflower is frequented by a variety of pollinators.

Below: The leaves of green-headed coneflower can grow 10 inches long and 10 inches wide near the base.

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A member of the aster family, green-headed coneflower, AKA cut-leaf coneflower or tall coneflower, is one of several *Rudbeckia* species native to Minnesota. Easily differentiated from its relatives by its tall stature and unique inflorescence, it's frequently visited by a variety of pollinators. Deer generally avoid the plant, which makes it an ideal addition to landscapes with moist soils and room for it to grow. Green-headed coneflower thrives in riparian areas, where it can expand into large clumps.

Plant Stats

WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS: FACW

PRIMARY USES:
Pollinators' nectar source; birds' seed source

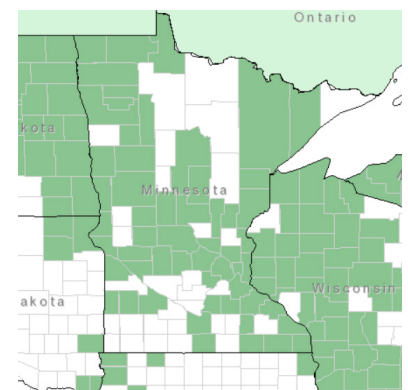
Identification

This lanky perennial can grow 4 to 9 feet tall, branching from its upper half. It tends to grow in clumps from seed or spreading rhizomes. Flowers appear from July through September. Their green, cone-shaped center disks are surrounded by six to 12 bright yellow, drooping petals. Those ray flowers grow 2 to 3 inches

wide. The center disks turn from green to golden-brown later in the fall. Single or multiple smooth, light green stems rise from the base. Large basal and lower stem leaves can reach 10 inches long and wide; they're irregularly toothed and deeply lobed. Higher up the stem, the leaves are smaller with shorter stalks.

Range

Green-headed coneflower is common in most Minnesota counties. It's native to all states across the Lower 48 except for three: California, Nevada and Oregon. It is typically found around wetland areas, along streams, close to ponds, floodplains and in wet woodlands.



Range map source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Plants Database

Planting Recommendations



A lanky perennial, green-headed coneflower can grow up to 9 feet tall.

Easy to grow from seed, green-headed coneflowers can spread aggressively by rhizomes in a favorable environment. They prefer moist soils and full to part sun. Seeds of all varieties require cold-and-moist stratification to break dormancy and enable germination. When seed is spread in late fall, stratification can occur naturally over winter. Give these plants enough room; they'll grow up to 9 feet tall with a 2- to 4-foot spread. The species is tolerant of seasonal flooding and wet soils.

Uses

Flowers' pollen and nectar attract a variety of bees, butterflies, pollinating flies, beneficial wasps, skippers and moths. Silvery checkerspot butterfly larvae forage on its leaves. Goldfinches eat its seeds in the fall. Deer and other herbivores seem to dislike the foliage, so this plant can thrive in landscapes or gardens otherwise prone to browsing. The plant provides structure and cover for wildlife, and helps to stabilize soil and control riparian erosion.

Similar Species

Very close in appearance is the gray-headed coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*). It, too, has lobed leaves, but they are more finely divided. The stems and leaves are also hairy. The center of the inflorescence is more oval in shape and

dark brown in color. The flowers of sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*) are similar in shape to those of green-headed coneflower, but sneezeweed is shorter, with a winged stem, notched ray flowers and unlobed leaves.



Far left: The lobes of gray-headed coneflowers' leaves are narrower. Three images at right: Sneezeweed has winged stems and notched ray flowers.



Reference

Minnesota Wildflowers <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/cut-leaf-coneflower>

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