

CLASPING CONEFLOWER
Dracopis amplexicaulis (Vahl) Cass.

Description: Claspig coneflower is an annual herb with elongated, bluish, glaucous leaves that generally clasp around the stem at the base. The flower heads are similar to those of black-eyed susans, but they are smaller (mostly 1-2 inches in diameter). The yellow outer "petals" droop as the flowers mature, and the cylindrical black center (receptacle) is elongated up to 2 inches in length. Flowering begins in June.

Uses: This plant is used mainly for landscape beautification. It has potential for use in cultivated, garden situations, in naturalized prairie or meadow plantings, and along roadsides.

Site adaptation: It is adapted to many soil types, but it generally prefers a moist site. Natural stands are usually found on bottomland areas with a fairly rich soil and ample moisture. It prefers full sun and will not persist in a shaded location.

Cultural Specifications

Method of establishment: Seed

Planting time: August to September

Seedbed preparation: A firm seedbed is required. Claspig coneflower germinates best on a clean tilled site that has been firmed with a roller or finishing harrow before planting. Seed can also be planted into a closely mowed, chemically-killed, or burned sod area with a light disking or harrowing that scratches the soil surface. A layer of plant residue on the soil will interfere with seed germination.

Planting rate and method: 2-3 grams per 100 square feet (2-3 lb/acre) broadcast or shallowly drilled. Seed should be placed close to the soil surface. Cultipacking after planting will ensure good seed to soil contact. Seed will germinate soon after planting and remain as a small, nondescript plant over the winter months.

Fertilizer requirement: Plant growth and seed production are greatly improved by fertilization. Fertilizer should be applied in the spring prior to flowering. Apply according to soil test recommendations. If not available, a rate of 3.5-5.5 oz per 100 square feet (100-150 lb/acre) of 13-13-13 is adequate for most plantings. For seed production, increase the fertilizer rate to 9 oz per 100 square feet (250 lb/acre).

Companion plants: Claspig coneflower is well suited to growing with a wide variety of wildflowers and grasses. Some suggested companion wildflowers are calliopsis, black-eyed susan, gayfeather, purple coneflower, scarlet sage, cosmos, toadflax, and ox-eye daisy.

Management

Disking: Stands will reseed prolifically for several years, but will gradually decline without soil disturbance. Every two to three years, the site should be disked to control perennial weeds and promote claspig coneflower germination. August is the best month to perform this operation.

Mowing: If necessary, plants can be mowed in the spring before stem elongation begins in April. Stands that are not disked should be mowed in August, and a fall mowing in early November is also recommended.

Seed production: Seed matures fairly quickly after flowering. Mature seed is dark gray in color and similar to those of black-eyed susan. Seed should not be harvested until the receptacle appears brown and wooly with loose flower parts. At this stage, the seed easily shakes free from the receptacle. Harvesting must be completed quickly to prevent seed losses. Seed can be harvested by hand or with a conventional combine.

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