

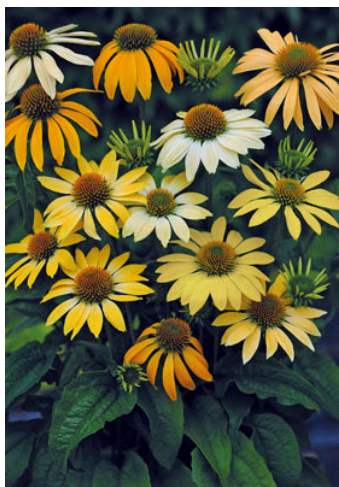
GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Going Native: Echinacea Mellow Yellows

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Purple-pink and white coneflowers have enlivened gardens for many years. Native to most of the eastern half of the U.S., Eastern purple coneflower is a delightful, easy-to-grow plant that's spurred breeders' imaginations, resulting in the dynamic range of colors and forms currently available.

The Jelitto breeding staff has been similarly fascinated with the possibilities, though developing a true color seed strain has its difficulties, as we surely guessed it would. Over a span of close to 20 years, the work yielded a strain worth introducing: a wide array of yellow colors, from a buttery ivory to banana, lemon yellow, melon, mango and pumpkin!

We call it Mellow Yellows and quite rightly—the colors are intense and bright as the flowers are budding up, unfurling colorful, fresh petals that mellow as the flower ages. This gives a mature planting a lovely spectrum of yellows in one viewing. Add in the textural beauty and green/gold/burnt orange of the evolving cone, and you have a lovely garden vignette. The plants will vary in flower color, as well as height, but there will be no pink in sight. The plant is also vigorous, sturdy and first year-flowering from seed.

Seed-grown *Echinacea purpurea* hybrids have a vigor and hardiness that may be lacking in TC-produced plants. Most perennial growers have protocols in place for Magnus Superior, Ruby Star, Green Twister, etc. If so, Mellow Yellows will fit seamlessly into your perennial program.

General info

Mature plant height should be in the range of 28- to 36-in. tall by 16- to 20-in. wide. Plants generally bloom June through September/October. Hardiness range is Zones 4 to 8.

Soil and growing conditions

Mellow Yellows tolerates a range of soil types. Provide regular moisture until well established. Quite heat and drought tolerant as plants settle in. Grow in full sun—loves heat and can stand the humidity of the Midwest and South.

Sowing and germination

Approximately 270 seeds per gram. General sowing recommendation is 2 to 3 seeds per cell in a 72-cell tray. Mellow Yellows is a rapidly germinating variety. Keep seed in constant moisture (not wet) at temperatures of about 68F (20C). Seeds must be covered thinly. Germination in two to three weeks. Keep in cooler conditions after germination occurs.

Scheduling

Winter, late winter and early spring are the obvious best times to schedule this first year-flowering plant, though in controlled conditions it can be sown successfully year-round. Seeds will germinate in two to three weeks and grow quickly from that point, so be sure to plan for supplemental light if started in winter. Allow four to eight weeks from germination to transplant of the plugs or cells.

Vernalization and fertility

No vernalization is needed for first year-flowering Mellow Yellows. Medium fertility at 150 to 200 ppm.

Other information

Mellow Yellows makes a good cut flower. Good plant combinations for the garden include the complimentary color of lavender or purple ... think perovskia, liatris, agastache, mepeta or magenta/ruby-colored Knautia macedonica.

Use Echinacea Mellow Yellows as a seasonal theme plant in a designed plant community, providing tufts of colors from June through September. Plants will gently re-sow if flower heads are left to seed. Current trends in naturalistic gardening and plant communities encourage the winter presence of seed heads and the seeding around of species to form colorful colonies.

Due to the long flowering nature of echinacea, honey bees and many other pollinators use this plant for sustenance. Take a look at the nativity map on the USDA Plant website to see if Echinacea purpurea is native to your neck of the meadow: <https://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=ECPU>. **GT**

For more information, please visit www.jelitto.com or contact Mary Vaananen in Jelitto's USA office at (502) 895-0807 or maryv@jelitto.com. The head office of Jelitto Staudensamen GmbH is located in Schwarmstedt, Germany. (Staudensamen is German for "perennial seeds.")