

Dalea purpurea Purple Prairie Clover

Dalea purpurea (Purple Prairie Clover) is a hardy native perennial wildflower that grows from a sturdy taproot penetrating soils to a depth of 6 feet. This deep root system enhances the plant's tolerance for heat, drought and diverse soil conditions, but as a result, the above-ground plant tends to get off to a slow start. Young plants have a single unbranched stem and develop into a bushy vase-shaped form. Dark green leaves are compound and comprised of many smooth, narrow leaflets, resembling rosemary. In mid-summer, June through August, plants are topped with showy rosy-violet flower spikes reaching 3 feet in height. Each dense cylinder shaped spike is 1-2" long and packed with tiny, brilliant florets. Blooming begins at the bottom of the spikes and gradually progresses upward during the 4-6 week blooming period. When blooms are done, spikes turn into gray to brown seed pods. A member of the legume family, it is able to fix nitrogen in the soil, benefiting itself and nearby plants. Highly regarded as a pollinator plant, it is both a nectar and pollen resource for a range of pollinators and a host plant for butterfly larvae.

Botanical Name: *Dalea purpurea*

Common Name: Purple Prairie Clover

Family: Fabaceae

Nativity: Great Lakes Native

USDA Zone: 3-8

Light Type: Full sun

Soil Type: Clay, Loam, Sand

Soil Preferences: Prefers poor soils, well-drained.

Soil Moisture: Moist to dry

Typical height (ft): 1-3'

Typical width (ft): 1-1.5''

Foliage: deep green bean-like foliage is somewhat ornamental and remains attractive throughout the growing season.

Bloom Time: June, July, August

Bloom: Rose-purple

Ecological features: Provides pollen and nectar for a variety of bees, butterflies, flies and beetles; Nitrogen-fixing; host plant for caterpillars of Southern Dogface Butterfly (*Zerene cesnoia*); attracts specialist Cellophane Bees..

Tolerance of: Drought, salt, heat

Additional notes: Fine-textured foliage. Flowers bloom from the bottom of the raceme to the top. Long-lasting bloom time.

Companion plants: Nodding onion (*Allium cernuum*), Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), Rough Blazing Star (*Liatris aspera*), Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

For more information see:

<http://www.newmoonnursery.com/plant/Dalea-purpurea>

<https://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=DAPUP>

https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/ppr_cloverx.htm

<https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/purple-prairie-clover>

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=j970>

Images of *Dalea purpurea*



left: *Dalea purpurea* - Purple Prairie Clover (5988196396).jpg
flower head



right: Dalea purpurea (4008262158).jpg
thin and compound leaves



left: Dalea purpurea_1.jpg
plant form



right: Dalea purpurea_2.jpg
stem - showing leaf bases



Dalea purpurea_3.jpg

winter interest - fluffy gray seedheads

Image choices for narrative:

Dalea purpurea - Purple Prairie Clover (5988196396).jpg - flower head

Dalea purpurea (4008262158).jpg - thin and compound leaves