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GARDENING WITH THE MASTERS | JODI MORGAN

GARDENING WITH THE MASTERS: Late-Blooming Native Plants to Support Pollinators in Your Garden

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Morgan



Anise hyssop

Special to the Tribune

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Many garden plants struggle in August heat. Anise Hyssop and Purple Prairie Clover continue performing during the late summer/early fall. Pollinators rely on plants blooming in late summer/early fall with the objective of storing food. Both have densely packed tiny purple blossoms with a short bottlebrush appearance. Native to Georgia, anise hyssop and purple prairie clover and provide nectar for pollinators. Both prosper in Cherokee County. Anise hyssop and purple prairie clover are both deer resistant, drought tolerant, and bloom in August. Both plants are important to pollinators.

Anise hyssop is an herbaceous perennial plant in the mint family. When the leaves of many mint plants are crushed, they emit a strong scent. Anise hyssop has a distinct licorice and mint odor. Anise hyssop is a North America native, found growing throughout central and eastern part United States. This plant prefers USDA hardiness zones 4 to 9. Compost-rich, well drained soils are ideal for anise hyssop. Plants favor full sun. This plant thrives under drought conditions once established. Deadheading prolongs their flowering season.

Anise hyssop is easy to propagate through multiple methods. Plants spread naturally by rhizomes. Anise hyssop seeds require sunlight to germinate. These plants can be divided in early spring when they first begin emerging. Stem cuttings are also used to propagate anise hyssop. Anise hyssop grows two'-4' tall and two'-3' wide. Like most mint plants, the stems are square. Leaves alternate on the stems four" long and two" across. The leaf blades contain rounded teeth. The upper side of the leaf is soft gray-green, and the bottom of the leaf contains delicate silvery hairs. The bottlebrush appearance of the concentrated small flowers is blue violet.

Radcliffe's dagger moth lays eggs on anise hyssop. This plant is a high-value pollinator plant because each plant produces as many as 90,000 blooms. Bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, flies, and moths are drawn to the nectar and pollen produced by this plant. Pollinators appreciate anise hyssop's late season flowering. While other summer bloomers are fading, this plant continues to provide nectar and pollen for pollinators. Anise hyssop thrives in a variety of garden settings including butterfly gardens, perennial gardens, herb gardens, prairie gardens and mass plantings. This underappreciated plant provides a stunning display in many types of flower beds.

Purple prairie clover is a perennial flowering plant native to the United States. This legume is found in central prairie habitats to eastern meadows. This is an essential plant for prairie restorations but is versatile in many varieties of garden beds. Purple prairie clover prefers average to dry soils in full sun. This plant is low-maintenance and corrects the soil as it grows. Purple prairie clover traps nitrogen from the air pumping the natural

soil fertilizer into the soil. It also has deep, lengthy taproots which are characteristic of grassland plants. These expansive root systems allow purple prairie clover to withstand extreme heat and drought.

Purple prairie clover is propagated from seed. The plant self-sows or by gardeners after moist stratification. Many native plant nurseries sell this plant commercially. Purple prairie clover grows one to three inches tall. Leaflets grow on both sides of the stem in opposing pairs. The leaflets appear short two"-5" and narrow one-eighth" across. The flowers tower above the plant on a long spike. Purple prairie clover flowers bloom in a wreath formation starting at the bottom of the spike. Each section blooms together as summer progresses.

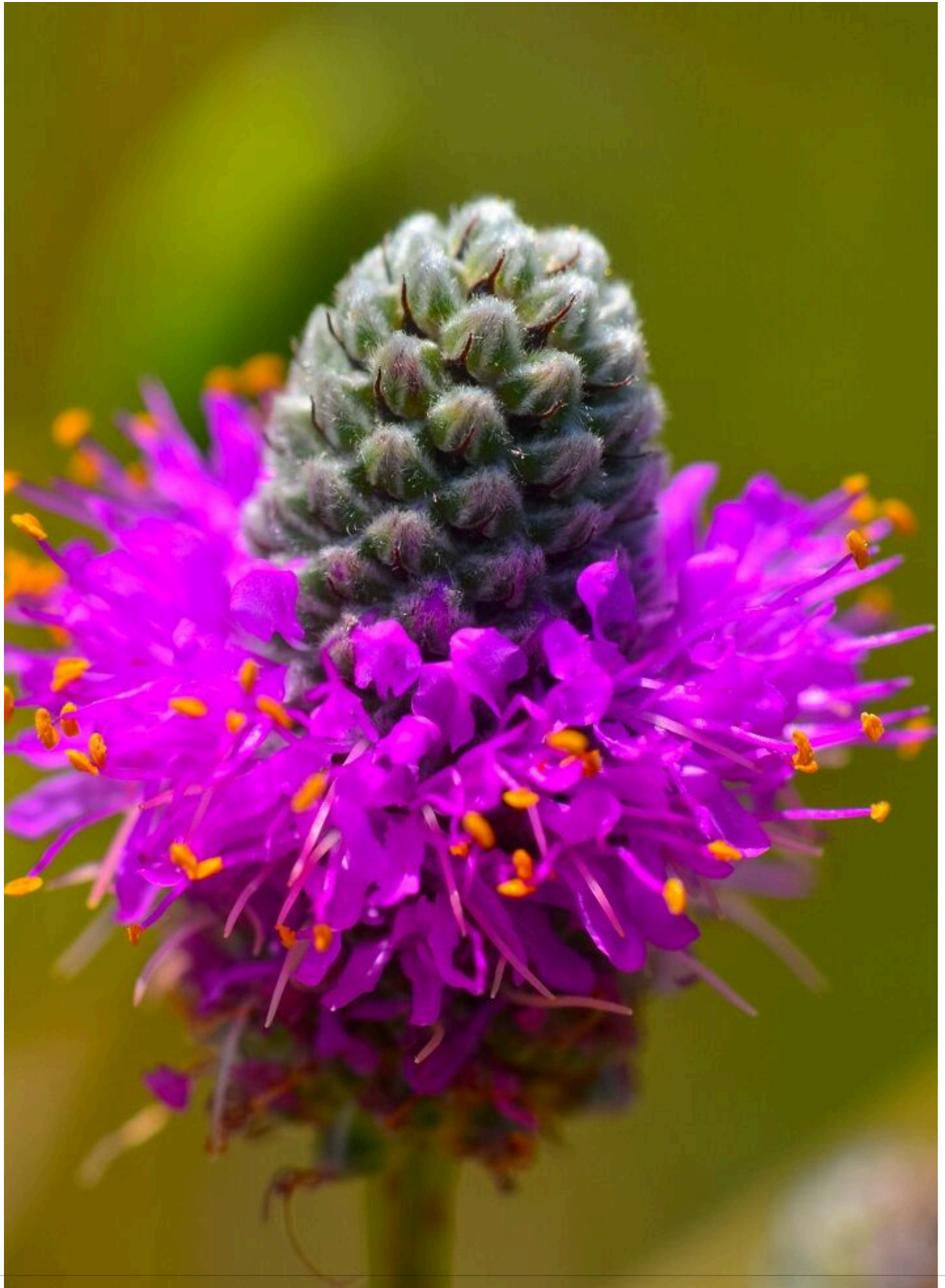
Purple prairie clover is a host plant for the Southern Dogface and Reakirt's Blue butterflies. Other pollinators such as bees and moths rely on this plant for nectar and pollen. In the fall, birds frequently consume the discarded flower head seeds. The legume portion of this plant provides protein to small mammals.

Purple prairie clover has various garden adaptations. It stands out in a rock garden and provides August color in perennial flower beds. Purple prairie clover is crucial inside native flower beds. Restored or naturalized prairie installations include purple prairie clover. The bottle shaped flower head distinct form appears stunning planted in masse.

UGA Extension hosts a pollinator census every year. This year's Southeast Pollinator Census (GSEPC) occurs Aug. 18-19. The Cherokee County Master Gardeners are sponsoring various GSEPC venues. Check the Cherokee County Master Gardeners website and our social media for locations, times and pollinator census activities. If you cannot join us, visit <https://gsepc.org/>.

The Southeast Pollinator Census can be done at your house, in a local park, or anywhere there are plants. Your participation in this event assists local pollinator scientists. Happy Gardening!

Jodi Morgan is one of many UGA Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Cherokee County. For more information or questions, contact the Cherokee County Extension Office at 770-721-7803 or for upcoming seminars follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cherokeemastergardeners or cherokeemastergardeners.com.



Purple clover

Special to the Tribune

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