

Harvesting Echinacea



Looking for a powerful herb to grow that will put on a show in the garden too?

Echinacea is your herb. It's well-known for being an immune-enhancing plant. It has a reputation for being effective against colds, sore throats, and flus, especially if taken at

the beginning of the infection. Herbalist Rosemary Gladstar points out in her book *Medicinal Herbs, A Beginner's Guide* that it is also rich in polysaccharides, which aids cells in resisting viruses, bacteria, and fungi. Here's more in-depth information on the health benefits of echinacea from chiropractor Dr. Axe.

Harvesting Echinacea Root

If you are growing this herb for use in your own medicinal products, remember that the plant must be three years old before you can harvest its root for teas and tinctures and other goodies. The following three species are all perfect choices to grow for medicinal purposes: *Echinacea purpurea*, *Echinacea augustifolia*, and *Echinacea pallida*.

Besides its medicinal properties, echinacea is simply a beautiful addition to your garden. It's a hardy perennial that needs full sun, is easy to grow, and will reach a maximum height of about 30 inches. It's bright color adds a cheerful note to any garden, even if you don't harvest the root.

Harvest echinacea root in the fall after the summer flowers and leaves have died back.

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Harvesting Echinacea Root

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Make sure the echinacea plant is three years old before you harvest the root. Flowers and leaves can be dried throughout the summer.

Instructions

1. Dig up the root. Split it into 2 pieces with a knife or garden spade. Replant one of the pieces so that the original plant can continue to grow.
2. Take the root you are harvesting and wash it off, scrubbing it carefully to remove all the dirt.

3. Chop the root into small pieces.
4. Dry the root by placing on a screen, in an oven set at a low temperature (212 F or lower), or in a dehydrator (follow the instructions). Make sure you have good air flow.
5. Store the dried root in a container.
6. The flowers and leaves can also be dried in June and July, throughout the time they are blooming. Add a pinch of the dried flowers and leaves to the root when making tea to enhance the color.

Since I just planted my echinacea this summer, I won't be harvesting it for two more years. However, I am fortunate to have the Good Earth store and their incredible herb room not too far from my house where I purchase my dried echinacea root and many other things. I believe you can also purchase from them online. If you can't find a local source, Mountain Rose Herbs is another excellent online supplier for dried herbs and natural products.



Let me know if you've grown echinacea and how you use it. Happy harvesting!

Jane Van Osdal