

Cuero Germplasm Purple Prairie Clover (*Dalea purpurea* Vent. var. *purpurea*)

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Purple prairie clover, *Dalea purpurea*, is a native perennial legume that is distributed throughout central, west, and south Texas. It is adapted to sandy, sandy loam, and other moderately drained soils on prairies, hillsides, and plains. The plant has multiple stems growing from a woody taproot. The leaves alternate and have an average of five leaflets per pinnate compound. Each leaf averages about one inch long. The purple flowers appear on the end of stems and have cylindrical floral spikes which grow about two inches long. Seed pods, that are about ½ inch long, will produce 1 to 2 seed each. Purple prairie clover blooms from June through September, with mature seed produced from mid-July to October. Cuero Germplasm is a composite plant release from the James E. "Bud" Smith Plant Materials Center in Knox City, TX. Seed was collected from native plants located in the southern part of DeWitt County, approximately eleven miles from the town of Cuero, Texas.

Purple prairie clover has many benefits as a conservation plant. It may be used as a component in seed mixtures for pasture and range plantings to provide a legume for nitrogen assimilation. Young foliage provides a high nitrogen foliage for livestock, primarily sheep and goats, and deer. Earlier in the summer, the PMC noticed heavy browsing from deer. One evening, thirty-four deer were counted in the half acre production block. The seed from purple prairie clover provides food for birds and small mammals. Purple prairie clover also attracts a wide variety of pollinator species including Southern Dogface butterflies and bees during the blooming period. It is also used to prevent soil erosion on dam structures, roadsides, and other critical erodible areas.



Bee on Purple Prairie Clover USDA-NRCS



Purple Prairie Clover Flower USDA-NRCS



Purple Prairie Clover Field USDA-NRCS

The full newsletter can be found at the following website:

<http://www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/bio/docs/reverchon%20naturalist%20V4%202011rev.pdf>

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