

October 2020 Plant of the Month



Agalinis purpurea (L) Pennell; Purple false foxglove, or purple gerardia

Plant of the Month for October is one of New Jersey most beautiful plants, *Agalinis purpurea*, the purple gerardia. This plant is widespread in the State and can be observed during the late summer and early autumn months of the year. It is found throughout the eastern United States, from Massachusetts to Georgia (USDA Plants Database, 2020). The plant is recorded from 20 of the 21 New Jersey counties (Hough, 1983), and is one of the most widespread of the genus.

Agalinis purpurea is a member of the figwort family, the Scrophulariaceae, although some taxonomists place the genus in the family Orobanchaceae. New Jersey is home to a many members of this genus, making it a well represent group in New Jersey's flora. Once named *Gerardia* by the Academy's Dr. Pennell, *Agalinis purpurea* is but one of a suite of species. Purple gerardia is separated from other purple colored species by its large size. The flowers are edged with a fringe of purple hairs, and the bilabiate flowers are flattened across their corolla.

Purple gerardia has no known recorded native American food or medicinal uses. A similar purple flowered species, *Agalinis tenuifolia*, has been used as an infusion for diarrhea. The plant will be in flower until end of the month. Look for the conspicuous purple haze of color in open meadows and near the freshwater edges of salt marshes. It's a beautiful plant and should be on everyone list of favorite pants.

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