‘Raider Amethyst’ Prairie Verbena
[Glandularia bipinnatifida (Nutt.) Nutt.]

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Prairie verbena [Glandularia bipinnatifida (Nutt.) Nutt.] is a common wildflower native from the Mississippi River west to Arizona and from southern Mexico north to South Dakota (Umber, 1979). Correll and Johnston (1970) reported Verbena bipinnatifida Nutt., the previous scientific classification for prairie verbena, often covers large acreages in dry plains, prairies, pastures, and disturbed roadsides. These large populations are associated frequently with gypsum, limestone, or calcareous soils (Umber, 1979).

Prairie verbena has a variable growth habit. Plants of a similar age from the same population may be either prostrate or erect (Umber, 1979). Habit variability may also be related to growing conditions and season. In early spring during short days, the internodes are reduced and the plants are more prostrate. As day length increases, internode length increases and the plants attain a more upright habit. Prairie verbena has densely branched stems covered with stiff white hairs (Correll and Johnston, 1970), leaves that are deeply incised, and several growth forms or ecotypes resulting in some attaining specific or varietal status.

Prairie verbena blooms primarily from March through June and less freely through October. In moist situations in the South, flowering continues unabated throughout the growing season, enhancing the use of this native for edge work in the garden (Irwin and Wills, 1961). The colors can range from pink to lavender or a rosy purple within G. bipinnatifida. Diggs et al. (1999) described the arrangement of these flowers as described the arrangement of these flowers as complex with an increase in individual flower development.

Table 1. Comparison of a commercially available common G. bipinnatifida and G. bipinnatifida ‘Raider Amethyst’ in field trials, Dallas, Texas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inflor. width (cm)</th>
<th>Leaf width (cm)</th>
<th>Inflor. width (cm)</th>
<th>Leaf width (cm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>3.07 (0.253)a</td>
<td>3.21 (0.307)</td>
<td>3.24 (0.287)</td>
<td>3.87 (0.821)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raider Amethyst</td>
<td>3.62 (0.246)</td>
<td>3.60 (0.517)</td>
<td>3.52 (0.291)</td>
<td>4.61 (5.541)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>***</td>
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*Means represent separate measurements of 15 plants of each germplasm source. Numbers within the parentheses are the s.e. of the mean.

Additional reference...

**‘Raider Amethyst’ prairie verbena exhibits a mature plant height of 25 to 29 cm with a spread of 95 to 125 cm. This mat-forming perennial composes a dense crown covered with dark purple florets (purple–violet group 82A) with a light-yellow eye (yellow group 8D) (Royal Horticulture Society, 2001). The spike inflorescence is composed of 20 to 30 florets. ‘Raider Amethyst’ blooms from late spring to frost and attains 50% bloom 95 to 130 d after emergence. When the plant is out of bloom, the attractive foliage continues to provide interest. ‘Raider Amethyst’ leaves are finely dissected, dark green (yellow-green group 146A) (Royal Horticulture Society, 2001), and have a 3- to 5-cm width and a 4- to 5-cm length. The seed is dark brown (brown group 200A) (Royal Horticulture Society, 2001) with an average 1000 seed weight of 2.23 mg.

**Description**

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**Performance**

During the 2003 and 2004 growing seasons in Dallas, Texas, plants randomly selected from cycle 3 and cycle 4 populations...
were compared with a commercially available common seed source of prairie verbena using a randomized complete block design. Each of the four blocks contained five plants transplanted into unamended soil and given supplemental irrigation as necessary. An analysis of variance was run using SPSS 13.0 (SPSS, Chicago), and it was determined that ‘Raider Amethyst’ developed significantly larger flowers and foliage than the commercial variety (Table 1). This increase in flower and foliage size created a more dense appearance (Fig. 1) than in the commercial variety.

‘Raider Amethyst’ is recommended for use in water-conserving landscapes and low-maintenance plantings. Plants may be propagated by tip cutting or via seed. Seed propagates easily, but should be held in cool, dry storage for more than 26 weeks to enhance germination (Vyas and Agarwal, 1970).

Surface and internal soil drainage to prevent overwatering is critical for this plant, especially during the winter months. In areas with heavy soils, raised beds are recommended. Deep, infrequent watering is the most efficient way to maintain ‘Raider Amethyst’ after it is established in the landscape. ‘Raider Amethyst’ blooms throughout much of the growing season with minimal care. Shearing to remove spent flower spikes will increase flowering and provide a more compact habit.

Availability

For availability of both experimental and commercial seed, contact the corresponding author.

Literature Cited


