

## **NICE! Plant of the Month: Prairie Verbena**

*Scientific name: Glandularia bipinnatifida (Verbena bipinnatifida)*

**Family:** Verbenaceae

**Other Common Names:** Dakota mock vervain

**Type:** Annual or short-lived perennial, semi-evergreen

**Natural Habitat:** Occurs from South Dakota to Georgia, west to California, and in Mexico. Common throughout south-central to north-central Texas, and the Panhandle.

**Growth:** Low-growing groundcover, 6-12" height, spreading 1 to 2' from central stem. Tips of branches curve upward, displaying the flowers at the ends.

**Deer Resistance:** Resistant to browsing

**Wildlife:** Flowers very attractive to nectaring butterflies

**Light Tolerance:** Full sun; tolerates some shade

**Flowers:** Many small magenta to purple flowers, in 1-2" circular heads; blooms March-Dec. when temperatures are above freezing.

**Fruit: Leaves:** Fruit is dry, capsule-like. 1-2 ½" leaves are gray-green, hairy, deeply divided.

**Water Requirements:** Can be very drought tolerant. Will bloom more with additional watering, but do not overwater.

**Soil Requirements:** Well-drained sands, loams, clays and limestone-based soils. Tolerates very dry to moderately moist conditions.

**PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS:** Space plants 1 to 2 feet apart. Dig a hole at least two times wider than, but the same depth as the root ball in the nursery container. Sides of the hole should be irregular, not smooth. Remove plant from container, taking care to support the root ball. Loosen exterior roots gently with your fingers. If the plant is root-bound and cannot be loosened by hand, the outer roots may be cut in several places. Lift the plant by the root ball and place into the hole. Backfill hole, using soil that was dug out. Do not add any soil to the top of the root ball. Gently firm the soil with your hands, but do not tamp it down. Place 3-4 inches of mulch over the bare soil around, but not touching the base of the plant.

**WATERING INSTRUCTIONS:** Water deeply after planting to settle soil around roots. Then every 7-10 days, as needed, during the first growing season. Before watering, check for soil moisture at a depth of an inch or two at the edge of the root ball. Skip a watering after a rainfall of ½ to 1 inch. Maintain this watering schedule until the first fall. Reduce watering during the cool fall and winter months. In a "normal" year, no watering may be necessary during the fall and winter, but during a dry period, monthly watering may be needed. Second Spring and thereafter: Water monthly only during periods of drought. Once established, natives will survive with little supplemental irrigation.

**OPERATION NICE! TIP:** Generally no maintenance is required. Prairie verbena may seed out and spread from planted areas but is not aggressive and can be easily controlled. It works well in rock gardens,

wildflower areas, or as a low border where a colorful groundcover is desired. Native prairie verbena can be used in place of the many verbena cultivars, sold as “garden verbenas.” These are mostly hybrids of South American origin and are usually grown as annual bedding plants.