

# AMERICAN PENSTEMON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## CONTENTS FOR THIS ISSUE

With spring officially here most areas, we see plants of native landscapes and gardens flourishing. In this issue we have reports on APS Special Projects, Santa Fe Botanical Garden Tours, Hi tech ways to track those elusive firmly rooted plants, people who make APS better and a little chronicle on a Colorado Plateau Penstemon.

### **Announcement of Special Project Awards 2010-2011 By: Barbara Lewis**

In November 2009, the Board of the American Penstemon Society approved guidelines and funding for Special Projects giving more a more formal status within APS. The primary objective of Special Projects one-year awards is: To select and provide financial support for projects that are practical and useful to APS members.

In 2009-2010 three awards were made. This year four worthy and interesting projects have been funded and are described below:

1. **Denver Botanic Gardens:** “Testing germination protocols for endangered, threatened or rare Penstemon species and adding to the National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation seed Bank”

Measurable Objective Denver Botanic Gardens’ staff will test five germination protocols on at least 5 species of endangered, threatened or rare penstemon to determine the most effective germination method for each species. Old seeds from the NCGRP will be tested as well to compare germination of previously banked seeds with newly collected seeds of the same species. New seed will be collected for the experiment as well as for seed banking with NCGRP.

2. **Center for Native Ecosystems:** Parachute Penstemon Conservation Campaign  
Measurable Objective Protection of Parachute penstemon under the Endangered Species Act and preservation of its remaining habitat on the Roan Plateau.

3. **University of British Columbia Botanical Garden and Center for Plant Research:**  
UBCBG Dasanthera Penstemon breeding program

Measurable objective I am embarking on a multi-year program of assembling various penstemon taxa of cultivated and wild origin and hybridizing a select group of them. I hope to create useful, improved plants for commerce and wider appreciation by the gardening public. I also hope that this effort will bring Dasanthera penstemons wider attention for their attractive habits and floral qualities. (See 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, *Evaluation*, below)

*The Society's grant is to be focused on travel costs associated with sourcing wild origin penstemon taxa in BC's southern interior. Targeted populations are located as far as 250 miles from UBCBG's Vancouver breeding and trial site.*

#### 4. **Colorado State University Extension, Golden Plains Area:** Burlington FFA Cooperative Penstemon Project

Measurable objective FFA students will be able to identify penstemons and learn how to propagate them from seed in the greenhouse. The general public will learn the growth habits and environmental requirements of penstemons and understand their use in all types of garden settings. Emphasis will be placed on the value of native species in regards to aiding the local pollinator populations and wildlife benefits of food and shelter. Plant diversity will be stressed as well as thrifty watering techniques.

#### **Santa Fe Botanical Garden's 2010 Garden Tours—Don't Miss Them!** **June 6<sup>th</sup> and June 13<sup>th</sup>, Santa Fe, New Mexico** **By Rosemary Minard**



From intimate enclosures to grand vistas, from contemporary landscapes to traditional designs—once again Santa Fe Botanical Garden's June garden tours offer a range of beautiful and inspirational Santa Fe gardens. The June 6<sup>th</sup> tour will feature a number of cottage gardens—southwestern style!—in a little-known, secluded neighborhood, downtown near the Railyard. The range of variations on the theme will amaze you. Park your car and get to know this charming neighborhood up close as you stroll from garden to garden. Tour goers will also visit two larger gardens just north of town where plants, sculptures and garden artifacts take on additional interest against stunning backdrops of mountains and forests.

On June 13<sup>th</sup> the tour returns to the historic area bordering the Acequia Madre. Park at the Acequia Madre School and visit three charming gardens just a short walk away. If you're game for a bit of adventure, you can continue on foot via Abeyta Street (a typical "old Santa Fe" lane that twists and turns, gently climbing, from one charming surprise to the next) to a magnificent garden combining both European and Asian motifs on Camino Rancheros. It's a short drive for those who prefer to save their energy and there is plenty of street parking nearby. Maybe you'd like a short hike with no rise in elevation. In that case, you can walk from the elementary school, via Arroyo Tenorio, to a recently restored garden on Miller St., where purple clematis adds pizzazz to the ivy-covered wall. Of course, you can also drive, with parking nearby.

Last year's pre-tour luncheon at the Inn of the Turquoise Bear sold out early, so this year you must reserve early. The gourmet picnic will take place on June 6<sup>th</sup>, beginning at

11:30, at a beautiful Brownell-Howland Road estate. Ticket holders for the picnic will dine on the estate's expansive grounds beneath mature aspen and evergreen trees. They will visit the rose garden, the poolside gardens, and tour a fanciful garden room with its exotic birds and tropical plants.

For details and tickets please visit the Santa Fe Botanical Garden website, [www.santafebotanicalgarden.org](http://www.santafebotanicalgarden.org) or call the SFBG office at 505-471-9103.

Rosemary Minard is a SFBG Board Member and longtime member of the Garden Tour Committee

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## **APS iPad app?**

**By: Dwayne Dickerson**

Amateur botanists felt well-equipped heading into the field carrying a good map, loupe and a well-worn field guide a decade ago. Today, the same plant hunter is likely to carry a digital camera, GPS, cell phone and lightweight netbook tucked into a knapsack. How might this change the botanical field experience? After Lewis and Clark returned from their historic 1804 expedition, the public waited years for them to publish their journals of the odyssey beginning in St. Louis and ending at Ft. Clatsop near the mouth of the Columbia River. By the time their description was completed and published, the public's enthusiasm had cooled and they were largely forgotten.

With a GPS set to "track", today's adventurer returns home with each step of his hike documented with satellite waypoints. As soon as the waypoints are transferred effortlessly by USB cable into a program such as Google Earth, the hike can appear on a 3-D landscape and be downloaded onto any other computer worldwide in seconds.

Connecting a GPS-equipped digital camera by the same USB cord enables one to transfer a picture album or video directly into a mapping program for instant integration onto a path or track, positioning the photos with GPS tags for accurate locations and inserting the background with a topo landscape.

I recently watched a demonstration of all these features compiled in one iPhone app. The Denver-based firm's product AccuTerra is built on a platform of streamed images taken from Learjet flyovers of the continental United States at 35,000 feet. Synchronized with GPS coordinates, the firm can overlay the landscape with any database from real estate boundaries, oil and gas lease tracts, photographic albums or one could imagine a herbarium overlay pinpointing collection points with appropriate botanical illustrations and photo links.

All of this was bundled within an iPhone app and easily displayed on the phone's screen with a keyboard command. The demonstrator had parked his car at the Roxborough State Park trailhead, photographed along the way while the phone mapped his route and added GPS coordinates to every photograph while it recorded his track and when he returned to the car, he immediately sent his experience out by e-mail to a group of hiking friends, complete with 17 photos. The only digital device in his pocket was his iPhone. How can we utilize this in the APS organization? Instead of waiting weeks or months for a trip journal to appear in the newsletter or other publication, consider the possibility of uploading all our Craig fieldtrip routes with flower pushpins marking the GPS coordinates for each plant stop, onto the APS website. After the trip, we can add a few of the best member photos right onto the routes at each flower stop.

A year or two from now, if a member wants to load the web-based trip into a GPS, a car's navigation system, notebook or iPhone, the entire trip would be at the member's fingertips. After another decade, 10 annual trips and numerous members' trips such as Ginny Maffitt's trip along the Deschutes River near Maupin, OR could begin building an archive of fieldtrips for our future members' use.

Five years ago, we had approximately 75 members' e-mail addresses. Just a few years later our database had grown to over 200 addresses. Just as Picasa, Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter or other social networking sites allow millions of participants to become their own reporters, photographers and photo editors, APS can begin building its own digital legacy.

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Louise Parsons has taken upon yet another position in support of The American Penstemon Society. Louise is now handling the APS Seedex job. She is the past APS president and from her home in Corvallis, Oregon, she scouts out, organizes and leads trips into the diverse Penstemon habitats of the Northwest. To date there are at least 2 annual meetings to her credit and the 2011 trip into the Siskiyou Mountains of Idaho is in her capable hands.

Louise and her husband own and operate a surveying business, fly a small plane, no doubt to look for section corners and Penstemons and apparently travel to Switzerland to visit grandchildren. She is working on her doctorate in geology. A busy lady who devotes her time to make APS the great Society it is. Many thanks to Louise Parsons.

### **Beauty in a harsh land.**

**By: Mike Evans**

I suspect a pretty flower would be pretty regardless of where it grows. However the harshness of some landscapes often brings about a greater appreciation of beauty. It could be that it is unexpected, like "what are you doing in a place like this"? Or, for some reason we might grant the plant a little extra credit for going to the extra trouble of showing us it's beauty. We also need to realize the plant would be doing this regardless of whether we see it or not. Loa Penstemon *Penstemon ophianhtus* is a pretty plant growing in a harsh environment. It is found growing in sand dunes of southeastern Utah's Wayne County. This past winter and spring the area has had an unusual amount of precipitation, so far mostly in the form of snow. I want to share and chronicle a bit of this year's growing season.



**Image 1. A Loa Penstemon putting up new growth on April 22.**

In the past winter, this particular location (W110°10.794' N38°15.301) received about 74" of snow from Thanksgiving to the first day of spring. A lot of moisture, most of which went right down into the sand. Then the winds came and blew sand from one canyon to the next. The last week of April and the first of May saw two episodes of snow. Two inches on both occasions, but valuable moisture just the same. The intrepid Loa Penstemon as well as all the other native plants hung in there and have responded to the moisture and



sunshine. Hopefully the pollinators will arrive at the proper time and they too, will have successfully endured the fits of this spring. In the next issue I will hopefully have photos of pretty blossoms and perhaps seeds to follow.



**Image 2. The same view on May 2.**

**Image 3. May 4.**

This concludes this rendition the newsletter. I hope as many of you as possible can be at the meeting and field trips in Northwest Colorado, the first weekend of June. The next newsletter will be needing some material, so please send thoughts, wishes and photos to Mike Evans at [iroxranch@yahoo.com](mailto:iroxranch@yahoo.com).

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