

AMERICAN PENSTEMON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Trough and Pot with Covers



Ginny Maffitt

PENSTEMONS NEED PARASOLS—SOMETIMES

*Ginny Maffitt, gardening in zone 8b, 36”
rainy Sherwood, Oregon.*

If your species penstemons aren't surviving the winter, don't blame the cold and snow. It is often because of frequent rain and humidity, especially for areas of the western edge of the Pacific Northwest and the southern states. I've found that by supplying Plexiglas (clear, semi-rigid plastic) covers either over troughs or in-ground plants from November to April, the survival rate really climbs. Another advantage is the heat-sink effect in spring brings on buds in a hurry.

A member of our Columbia-Willamette chapter of NARGS, Rick Wagner, showed this effective way of stabilizing the covers during a talk about troughs that I pounced on. No more wire, bamboo or wooden stakes will hold my

covers now! The initial purchase averages about \$10 per trough, but will last many years, looking neat and staying put through windstorms.

You'll need 4 'threaded' rods (used for electrical work), which come in 1, 2 and 3' lengths. I use the 2 footers and push them as deeply as possible into the soil. Buy the Plexiglas where glass and plastic pieces are sold. A plastics company might have the best prices. An 18" x 24" piece sells for \$6.79 at Home Depot, with larger sizes available...the best price I've found. If you've grouped dry-land plants in the ground, a bigger piece might cover the lot. Now just add 8 washers and 8 nuts. Four of the nuts could be the rounded end nuts that look nicer. You'll need a drill that won't break plastic or my favorite, a wood-burning tool, probably found at craft stores.

Installation: Push the 4 rods into the corners of the pot or trough. Place the

plastic sheet on top of them and draw circles where they touch. Drill or burn the 4 holes a bit larger than the rod. Screw on 4 nuts about 1/2" (1.5cm) down the rod; add 4 washers which will protect the plastic from stress-cracks. Seat the plastic; add washers, then the last 4 nuts and you are done!

I cover all penstemons from the Rocky Mountains, and the southwestern U.S. with the exception of *P. pinifolius* and *barbatus* that are more rain tolerant. These species are also found in Mexico along with many more species where winter must rarely bring snow. Thus, they've survived by tolerating a damp winter. Other rain-tolerant Mexican pents are *P. kunthii*, *campanulatus* and *hidalgensis*. My lovely, lavender-violet *P. hidalgensis* is still blooming on a chilly, rainy, foggy Nov. 25th as I write this! More importantly, I can expect to see it hale and hearty in the spring and it sometimes reseeds itself in the beds. I successfully grow some cacti, *Raoulia australis* (vegetable sheep) from New Zealand and hardy succulents such as *Cotyledon* from South Africa under the covers. They add silvery leaves, texture or draping-over-the-pot ground cover to highlight the penstemons.

The trough pictured is one I've made. I used a recycle bin as the form as it's about 12" deep which suits penstemons. The trough has a killer whale in bas-relief in the Northwest Indian art tradition. I was experimenting with carving away the outer edges, leaving a raised center. The blue pot was a Grocery Outlet find for \$19. It grows the Idaho species I bought from Diane Stutzman of Spokane on the Idaho Annual Trip at the botanic garden in Sun Valley where we had dinner.



Basaseachic Falls, Mexico
Dale Lindgren

SPACE AVAILABLE
2009 ANNUAL MEETING
Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains,
Mexico

Dave Bentzin, Denver

Would you like the opportunity to study the penstemons common in northern Mexico? Exploratory trips these past two years have shown us that we can expect to see *Penstemon ambiguus*, *P. stenophyllus*, *P. campanulatus*, *P. faciculatus*, *P. kunthii*, *P. miniatus*, and *P. barbatus*. And, then there is certain to be the annual discussion concerning *Penstemon gentrii*.

This trip is fully escorted beginning in El Paso, Texas on September 4, 2009. Our guides will be the most knowledgeable botanists for that area:

-- Dr. Rich Spellenberg New Mexico State Univ. Las Cruces

-- Dr. Wynn Anderson Univ. of Texas at El Paso

In addition, General Chairman Dale Lindgren is arranging for some special speakers.

As of this date there are over 30 members signed up for the trip.

Registrations can be accepted until the

trip is full, or until the final payment date of July 1, 2009.

A more complete description of the trip may be seen in the attached article from the APS November 2008 newsletter and on the APS website at www.apsdev.org

If interested in joining us, request further information and a registration form from

Dan Schaaf, Registration Chairman at:
 dlindgre@unlnotes.unl.edu or,
 UNL – West Central Center
 402 West State Farm Road
 North Platte, NE 69101

**SEED EXCHANGE UPDATE
 STILL TIME TO ORDER**

Louise Parsons, Corvallis, OR

The APS Seed Exchange is humming along. I have hummers on the brain because this is one of those special winters when Anna's hummingbirds decide to stick around. They have been to our feeders every day and are being reported by birders all over the mid-Willamette valley here in verdant Oregon. But back to those seeds! Thanks to the generosity of donors, both previous and current, supplies are still good for many species. Understandably we are completely out of *P. caespitosus* and *saxosorum*. Those little gems were gone in the first couple of days, along with *cyathophorus*. We are low on *kunthii*, *virens*, *rupicola*, and *rostiflorus*. In case you have misplaced yours, the 2008 Seed lists, both old and new, are published on the APS webpage at www.apsdev.org. You have until March 1 to request seed. Keep me busy! I love it!

I hope that I did not confuse anyone by including the instructions and listing the 2008 donors in the document that included the old seed list. Though very impressive, donations were a little less this year, perhaps because I did not send out much in the way of reminders at seed-gathering time in mid-to-late summer. For 2009 I have already marked my calendar for this pleasant task. A little hint...plan now to gather seed and mark *your* calendars. I am willing to accept donations for the next list at any time. If any of you have seeds on hand, but were too busy in the late fall to make the December deadline, do send them along and I'll start the 2009 list.

Certain species are abundant, but still quite choice. Many of these are excellent selections for beginners. These "extras" can be obtained by members who intend to be involved in activities that promote penstemon growing to the public and to encourage APS membership. If you are participating in a special event that can promote penstemon growing, we can provide packaged seed. On these packets, I will include our web address and the full penstemon name. Write to me and let me know the basics: what, when, where. Feel free to suggest species that you know do well in the particular area. Recently I gave a penstemon talk to the Emerald chapter of NARGS and am scheduled for a local garden club in a couple of weeks. The APS pamphlets and basket of freebee seeds encourage interest.

Several donors have provided thoughtful and valuable comments along with their seeds. Details about habitat and cultural information are worth including somehow on the list. We try to save

paper and postage, as well as provide a navigable and easy-riding list. Yet surely these comments are worthy of inclusion. Speaking of saving expense and paper, I urge all members to supply APS with your e-mail address and receive the seed list and other timely communications in electronic format. If called-for, I can offer a greater variety of formats in the future. Never hesitate to write if you have comments or questions. E-mail me at parsont@peak.org or post to Louise Parsons, 1915 SE Stone Street, Corvallis, OR 97333-1832 US. Note that this e-mail does not spell my name properly, copy it carefully. Happy growing!

WEBSITE NEWS

NEW TO THE WEBSITE CULTIVATION TAB: LOOK UNDER PLANT AND SEED SOURCES

Barbara Lewis, Denver, CO

I well remember my “data gathering frenzy” when my penstemon addiction began only a few years ago. I wanted every species that possibly might grow. And, like all of us, I wanted to optimize my chances for success. The result was my study floor strewn with books, articles, catalogs, and website references. I used Excel sheets to coalesce the needed information for each species of interest. While this system worked it was terribly time consuming. Now there is an easier way provided by our website.

The first step in coalescing this information for website use was the construction of tables with information for every penstemon using every printed

resource I could find. You will find those tables within the **Cultivation Tab** by clicking on “**Cultivation Information.**”

What was still lacking, however, was having information from plant and seed catalogs in one place. So this year I have asked every plant and seed company for permission to copy their penstemon offerings into our website, including their lovely photographs. I will be adding that information to **the “Plant and Seed Sources”** section of **the Cultivation Tab**. By the time you read this article, some of the posting will be done. Have a look!

And please let me hear your suggestions. Maybe I missed your favorite supplier.

GARDEN VISITS

Barbara Lewis, Denver

When I conducted the Interview Survey for APS, many of you told me you would like to visit others’ gardens. I would like to set that idea in motion with your help. If you would welcome visitors to your garden this year, and if you provide me with the information listed below, I will make sure the information is posted on our website www.apsdev.org under the **Cultivation Tab**. If possible, please include a photo or two of your garden and I’ll include that in my listing under “Open Gardens 2009”. We will ask visitors to make appointments to see gardens.

Name
Complete address
Contact information
Brief description of the garden
Photos included?



**DIGGING DEEPER
FEATURES *PENSTEMON*
*HETEROPHYLLUS***

Barbara Lewis, Denver

The Digging Deeper Feature on our www.apsdev.org blog for October-January takes a closer look at one of our most beautiful penstemons, *P. heterophyllus*. It's a frothy array of pastel lavender flowers and delicate light green leaves. It blooms for much of the summer season. Who can argue with that?

To read the blog, look for any Blog button on our website and click it. Voila! There is the article. You are invited (encouraged) to make comments and share your own experience with growing *heterophyllus*. Just think what a nice aggregation of information we would have if even just a few people described their experiences!

If you'd like to see the same description as it appears in the blog along with several photographs of *heterophyllus* follow this sequence once you are at our website:

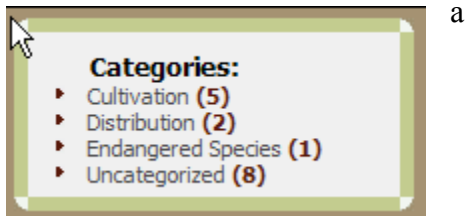
1. When you have entered the website click on the major tab "Cultivation"
- 2.. Click on Resources
3. Click on References on the left hand side of the page, within the brown box
4. Click on the little down arrow in the box that says "References". This gives you a table of contents with 11 categories. In each category there are several articles.
5. Now that you have clicked on References look for "Cultivation of Individual Species" and you will see the listing of the articles which address just a single species.

BLOGGING EXPLAINED

Hugh MacMillan, Web Master, Denver

Blogging is a function available on the internet. It is to some degree similar to the Editorial feature in a printed newspaper wherein an editor places an opinion in the paper. Later, the readers may reply with a comment, and if the newspaper editors chose to, the comments are placed on the newspaper editorial pages for all readers to enjoy. The American Penstemon Society blog can be seen at <http://apsdev.org/blog>.

The mechanics of the blog are different from a newspaper editorial. The editor(s) create an article (referred to as



POST) and PUBLISH the POST to the blog site. Further, the blog can be configured to arrange the POSTS in CATEGORIES so that they are easily accessed by topic. Click on any category to see Posts related to that subject. The category called 'Uncategorized' is the default area, containing the complete list of current Posts.

Posts are arranged chronologically, with the newest Post at the top of the Post list.

Viewers of the blog may choose to create and send a COMMENT. For the APS website, the comments are MODERATED. This means that the blog



administrator(s) review the comments and may choose to DELETE, REPORT AS SPAM, or ACCEPT the comments. If the comments are accepted, the comments are published to the blog and appear under the Post to which the Comment applies. To add a comment or read other comments, click on the 'Read Comments' link.

Scroll down to add a comment (supply name, email address, and add comment in the big white box). When finished, click on the SUBMIT COMMENT button.

The blog manager configures the blog site to ARCHIVE Posts so that the lists do not become unmanageable. Archived Posts may be accessed by clicking on the archive folder.



To navigate to the APS website home page, click on the title at the top of the blog page.

Feel free to add comments to the APS blog. We currently have three moderators of the Blog; Barbara Lewis' focus is Cultivation, Bob McFarlane moderates the Distribution area, and Hugh Mac Millan is the general website administrator.

This explanation is obviously a very simplified explanation of a Blog. For further explanation, go to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BLOG>.

Also, to see a really nice, simple explanation of a blog go to the page at <http://apsdev.org/blog/what-is-a-blog-the-movie/> and click the arrow to start the video.

HELP WANTED

SEED GERMINATING PENSTEMANIACS

Barbara Lewis, (303 903-9278, blewis@iriscolorado.com), is conducting a small study to learn about how members rank the difficulty level of germinating the seeds of various penstemons. She would like everyone who germinates seeds to participate. It's just a matter of placing check marks on a form she will send by email or USPS.

ASSISTANT WEBMASTER

The APS webmaster is looking for a person who has some experience with website management. This is for the individual who has at least an entry level of experience with website features. This is not a training position. If interested, send an email to humanator@apsdev.org with either a brief description of your experience or attach a document with such.

Job Description

Supports common webmaster duties

Scope of Activities

- Helps maintain and improve the structure, accessibility,

robustness, and approved design of the APS Website.

- Helps to enter content items directly into the website. Coordinates with webmaster and editors on resolving questions of errors or omissions on submitted data.
- Other activities as appropriate to the level of experience with various web tools, processes, and systems.

Experience Required

Should have some familiarity with HTML and html editors. Other optional experience and skills would include familiarity and usage of PHP, server side image galleries, FTP, and open source opportunities. Web design and graphics tools experience a plus. Additionally, experience with web enabled databases would be a plus (db backups and restores, MYSQL, SQL syntax – security and permissions).

Relationships

Reports to the webmaster

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS APPROVED

*Barbara Lewis and Lynn Ackerman,
Denver*

The Board of Directors recently approved Guidelines for Special Projects. The primary objective of Special Projects is

To select and provide financial support for projects that are practical and useful to APS members.

All members of the American Penstemon Society are eligible to submit proposals which typically will be of one

year's duration. The following topics are priority areas, but projects in other areas will also be considered:

1. User-friendly identification tools, such as a key for specific locales
2. Practical horticultural information, including cultivation, germination and garden placement
3. A way or ways to enhance connections and communication between and among members; for example, establishing a regional group, organizing a regional meeting, sponsoring a plant sale, or developing Power Point presentations for use by members, gardening organizations, or schools
4. Botanical or horticultural research which provides useful and interesting information for the penstemon gardener, for example determining the effect of pre-emergents on penstemons (adults or seedlings), effective ways to amend soils, better defining how much moisture selected penstemons need/tolerate in various soils, which penstemons hybridize
5. Ways to promote the enjoyment of penstemons, for example expanding the photo library on the web, developing a booklet describing recommended hikes within a specific geographical area, writing an annotated bibliography of relevant books
6. Means for helping to protect and preserve natural populations of penstemons, especially endangered species, for example creating a list of potential partnership organizations
7. Penstemon ecology, for example reporting on pollinators or interactions of penstemons with other plants and animals
8. Penstemon display gardens, for example compiling a list of botanical gardens and/or private gardens open to visitors

It is anticipated that projects will be funded in the range of \$100 to \$300; however slightly larger grant requests will be considered. Every effort is being made to keep the application process simple and feedback about that process will be welcomed.

This funding cycle will be delayed for this first year and has been scheduled to begin in June, with proposals accepted from February 1-May 1, 2009. In the future the request for proposals will be posted in January and closed March 31.

More details about Special Projects including submission guidelines will be posted on our website, www.apsdev.org soon after the beginning of 2009. At that time, those without access to a computer may write to Barbara Lewis at 10918 Sunshine Drive, Littleton, CO 80125 to request hard copies.

NEW BYLAWS READY FOR MEMBERSHIP APPROVAL

Bob McFarlane, Denver

The APS Bylaws were written in the late 1940's at the time of the launching of our society. They can be viewed on our website on the membership page.

They have been seriously outdated for many years and one of our objectives

this past year has been to bring them up-to-date. Phoebe McFarlane and Elaine Menter completed this task in November and the new proposed bylaws have been reviewed and approved by the board. However, since they represent a major change we are asking the membership to vote on their approval before they are adopted.

Please review the attached copy of the proposed new bylaws and submit your vote either electronically or by mail **by February 12** to board member

Julie McIntosh Shapiro at either 21 T St., Hull, MA 02045-1519 or, www.j.mci.shapiro1@verizon.net.

We will announce the results of the vote in our next newsletter.

2009 APS Budget

Bob McFarlane, Denver

Preliminary figures for 2008 indicate that our revenues from membership dues, seed exchange and annual meeting totaled about \$13,500 and expenses \$8,800 for a net gain to our treasury of about \$4,700. Membership dues and most expense items were close to our budget forecasts. We had higher net income than budgeted due to higher revenues and lower expenses from our annual meeting and unspent budgeted costs for new projects.

For 2009, the board approved budget shows total revenues at \$66,050, total expenses at \$66,000 and a breakeven in net income. The revenues are significantly higher than last year because of the higher cost of our annual meeting. We have estimated that 40

people will attend at an average cost of \$1500 each. The budget is as follows:

2009 APS BUDGET (\$)			
<u>Item</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Net</u>
Dues	5,800	400	5400
Seeds	250	100	150
Meet.	60,000	58,500	1500
Bull.		1,900	-1900
News.		3,000	-3000
Web.		600	- 600
Proj.		1,000	-1000
Endgr. Spec.		300	- 300
Other		500	- 500
Total	66,050	66,000	50

We are forecasting initial expenditures in the newly approved areas of Special Projects and Protecting Endangered Species. We are also forecasting increases in total membership dues. The costs of the annual meeting have been carefully analyzed and all costs will be collected before paying our Mexican travel people to insure that we will have no society overruns on this meeting.

SEED AVAILABILITY STUDY

Barbara Lewis of Denver has just completed a study on the availability of penstemon seeds from six commercial and plant society sources. Her findings have raised some interesting questions. Check it out at the APS website Blog and Archives: www.apsdev.org

Penstemon whippleanus
Most Frequently Offered



POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

President: Bob McFarlane, denvrbob@aol.com
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Membership
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Past President Louise Parsons, parsonl@peak.org
Robins Coordinator Ginny Maffitt, maffitt@verizon.net
Executive Board Jill Pitman, penstemon@waitrose.com
Julie McIntosh Shapiro, j.mci.shapiro@gmail.com
Val Myrick, vkmyrick@pacbell.net

Director, Seed Ex. Ginny Maffitt, maffitt@verizon.net
Registrar of Cultivars
and Hybrids Dr. Dale Lindgren, dlindgren1@uni.edu
Nominating Comm.
Chair: Libby Wheeler, glwheel@prodigy.net
Librarian: Dr. Stephen Love, slove@uidaho.edu
Custodian of Slide
Collection: Dr. Dale Lindgren, dlindgren1@uni.edu
Website Admin.: Hugh MacMillan, humanator@yahoo.com
Bulletin Editor: Dr. Stephen Love, slove@uidaho.edu
Newsletter Ed.: Val Myrick, vkmyrick@pacbell.net

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWALS

Sign me up –
Name

Address

E-mail

Phone

We do not sell, share, or distribute member data in any manner.

US and Canadian dues \$15 US; Elsewhere \$20 US, no cash please.
Make checks payable to American Penstemon Society. Mail to:

Joan and Truel West, Membership Secretaries
1050 Camino Rancheros
Santa Fe, NM 87505
APS.Membership@yahoo.com