

THE PENSTEMANIAC

NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN PENSTEMON SOCIETY

Volume No. 6, Issue No. 1 <http://apsdev.org> February 2012



Figure 1 *Penstemon haydenii* – courtesy Bonnie Heidel

Table of Contents

Annual Meeting.....	1-7
Registration Form.....	8-9
Special Projects Application	10
Penstemons In The UK	11-15
Membership Renewal	16
A Note From Phoebe And Dale	17
New and Life Members	18
Letter from the Editor	19
Officers and Directors	20

ANNUAL MEETING 2012

Highway 287 follows the old Overland Trail route as it crosses into Wyoming from Colorado. Following 287, we've just crested the last rise north of Virginia Dale on the Colorado/Wyoming border and in the valley, at some distance, is Laramie. The air is clear here and even at long distances, individual buildings are distinguishable. Laramie sits at 7165 feet elevation and appears serene, belying its notorious past. The first mayor quit after a few weeks and outlaws ruled the town. The first saloon was named 'Bucket of Blood', certainly befitting the early days.

The Snowy Range sits like a tiara to the west and the Laramie Range appears to the northeast. The Never Summer range is visible to the southwest.

Laramie and the surrounding mountain ranges and 'High Plains' will be the venue of the 2012 annual meeting of the American Penstemon Society and special guests, the Wyoming Native Plant Society members.

LARAMIE and WYOMING

Now, more genteel, Laramie was settled in the mid-19th century along the Union Pacific Railroad line, which crosses the Laramie River at Laramie. It is home to the University of Wyoming, Wyoming Technical Institute, and a branch of Laramie County Community College. Laramie Regional Airport serves Laramie. The remains of Fort Sanders, an army fort predating Laramie, lie just south of the city along Route 287. Located in the Laramie Valley between the Snowy Range and the Laramie Range, the city draws outdoor enthusiasts because of its abundance of outdoor activities. There is no shortage of lodging, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Many hotels may be found along Grand Avenue, a very short distance from the University.

Wyoming is the 10th largest state in the nation, yet the least populous. More information may be found on the websites listed below.

Wyoming and Laramie Resources

Laramie City Web Site

<http://www.ci.laramie.wy.us/>

Laramie on Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laramie,_Wyoming

Wyoming on Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wyoming>

Laramie Map

<http://g.co/maps/kyg8v>

Guest Speakers

Dennis Knight

Dennis Knight is now Professor Emeritus in UW's Department of Botany, where he taught for 35 years before retiring in 2001. He was department head for 10 years and is the author of "Mountains and Plains: The Ecology of Wyoming Landscapes". Dennis Knight will speak Friday night about the ecology of the areas we will be visiting on our field trips.

Craig C. Freeman



Craig C. Freeman received his B.A. from Wartburg College, and his M.S. and Ph.D. from Kansas State University. After brief stints at the University of Connecticut and The Nature Conservancy, he joined the Kansas Biological Survey (KBS) at the University of Kansas in 1988. He served as Acting Co-Director of the KBS from 1991–1994 and became Assistant Curator of the R.L. McGregor Herbarium in 1992. He currently is a Senior Scientist in the KBS and Curator of the McGregor Herbarium. He serves on the Boards of the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains, Flora of North America Association, Grassland Heritage Foundation, Kansas Native Plant Society, and Kansas Nature Conservancy. He

has more than 30 years of field experience in the Great Plains, Midwest, Rocky Mountains, and Intermountain West, and has published papers about plant systematics and taxonomy, floristics, and prairie conservation. He has authored or co-authored nearly 40 taxonomic treatments for the 30-volume Flora of North America series, including most recently the treatment for *Penstemon*. That treatment, which covers all species in the genus north of Mexico, will be included in FNA Volume 17, scheduled for publication in 2013. Craig Freeman is the Saturday night speaker and will focus on the genus *Penstemon*.

Field trips

(Dorothy Tuthill authored the field trip information)

With the help of local botanists, I have selected three routes that cover very different landscapes found in SE Wyoming. Keep in mind that these routes are intentionally vague, so we can fill in the details later, when the plants start to come up.

1. Dodge Mountain.



This trip will take us north of Laramie on Hwy 30, to just beyond the village of Rock River. Turning right onto Fetterman Rd, we'll head past Wheatland Reservoir #3 to Dodge Mountain, which is not a mountain, but a hill on the western flank of the Laramie Range, home to *Sphaeromeria simplex* and many other cushion plants like *Eriogonum acaule*. *Sphaeromeria simplex*, aka Laramie false sagebrush, is a SE Wyoming endemic

restricted to limestone. Penstemons at this site include *P. eriantherus* and *P. radicosus*. Beyond Dodge Mtn., the bedrock changes to granite, and supports a very different flora, including *P. virens*. We'll pass Wheatland Reservoir #2, and take a different route back to Hwy 30. There is a possibility that we'll be able to stop by an active dinosaur quarry on our way out.

This trip will require about 150 miles of driving, and give plenty of time for exploring the vegetation on foot, with a leisurely picnic lunch. Roads other than Hwy 30 are dirt, and the side road to the quarry, should we get to go, is a rough two-track.

2. Laramie Range.

For this excursion, we'll head into the hills east of Laramie to visit Vedauwoo, an impressive exposure of 1.4 billion year old granite, and points beyond. Our stop at Vedauwoo will include a hike at Turtle Rock, through aspens and past beaver dams, to examine the vegetation, which includes *Penstemon procerus*, *P. strictus* and *P. virens*. We hope to also see *P. eriantherus* var. *cleburnei*. Away from the water, the vegetation is predominantly sagebrush and grass, and the display of Indian paintbrush can be pretty amazing up there. For those who'd rather stay near

their vehicles, there's plenty of access to woods, shrublands, and rocks. Backroads south will lead us past *P. rydbergii* to Hwy 287, where we'll turn towards Colorado and the summit of Pumpkin Vine Pass, to look for *P. glaber* var. *alpinus*. Turn around, and we'll head north again to Stevenson Rd, and turn off to visit the ranch of Dan Tinker and Gail Stakes. Here we can stretch our legs plenty, find *P. secundiflorus*, *P. eriantherus* var. *eriantherus*, more *P. strictus* and *P. virens*, and pet goats and horses if we're so inclined. If we're fortunate, we'll see *P. angustifolius* var. *caudatus*, which typically blooms in May and early June, and/or *P. larcifolius* var. *exilifolius*, which usually blooms in July.

This trip requires the least driving, and provides the most opportunity for walking. The Turtle Rock Loop trail is about 3 miles long; the driving loop is about 60, with paved or good dirt surfaces.

3. **Snowy Range and Saratoga.**

The Snowy Range is a must-see destination when in the Laramie area. A paved road crosses the range, reaching an elevation of about 10,800 ft. The highest peak, Medicine Bow Peak, is a hair over 12,000 ft.



Our route will take us from Laramie on Hwy 130 to Centennial (population 100). We'll make a few stops just above Centennial to see *P. secundiflorus*, *P. strictus*, *P. radicosus* and a beautiful roadcut display of *P. virens*. *Penstemon whippleanus* is common in the Snowies, but we'll only see it if there's a low-elevation plant in bloom. Libby Flats overlook at the top of the highway will give us an opportunity to view several more mountain ranges in the distance, and alpine forget-me-nots at our feet. Expect lots of snow and cool breezes up there! Cruising down the west side of the Snowies, we may even see *P. palmeri* (not a native!) on our way to Saratoga. Though we won't stop at Saratoga, you may want to come back and sample the hot springs later. Instead, lands formally owned by the

Nature Conservancy but now owned by the author of "The Shipping News" and "Bad Dirt" have graciously been made accessible to us for viewing of *P. gibbensii*. Known best from south central

Wyoming and Moffat County, Colorado, this population is not only farther east than other known populations of the species, it is the only one to bloom in June. Plus, the plants are on ridges above the North Platte River, and the view is panoramic. From there, we go north to pick up I-80, and speed back to Laramie.

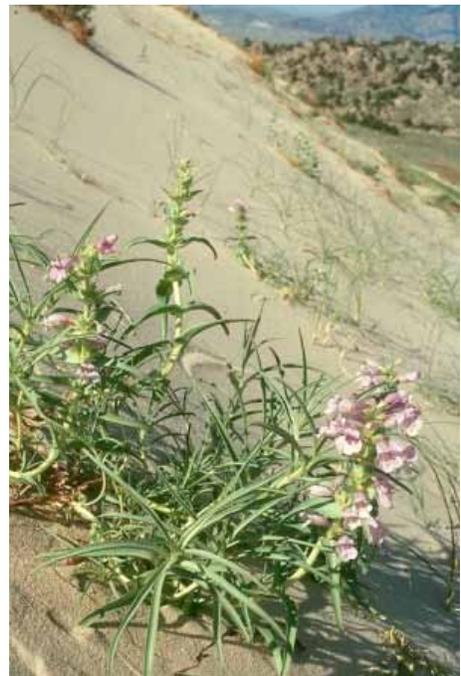
Driving distance: about 200 miles, but the Snowies and *P. gibbensii* make it all worthwhile (to say nothing of meeting a famous writer!). These will be mostly roadside stops; the walk to the overlook is short. Except for the few miles of dirt to access *P. gibbensii*, the roads are paved highways. (*Penstemon gibbensii* image courtesy Dorothy Tuthill)

Special Monday trip

Spectacular plants in spectacular scenery!

*The Wyoming Native Plant Society is sponsoring a Monday field trip to the Ferris Dunes, to view *Penstemon haydenii*, blowout penstemon, Wyoming's only federally listed Endangered plant species. The discovery of *P. haydenii* in Wyoming in 1996 actually may represent its re-discovery in the footsteps of F.V. Hayden over a century earlier. We will travel west from Laramie to Sinclair, then north, past Kortez Dam on the North Platte River, to the segment of river affectionately known to anglers as Miracle Mile. From there we head west, with special permission to cross private property on two-track roads, towards the eastern edge of the Ferris Mountains and the open sand dunes that constitute blowout penstemon habitat. Because of the need to limit the number of vehicles, we will leave low-clearance cars at Sinclair and Miracle Mile.*

This is a long trip, but worth your time, for the large-flowered and aromatic penstemon, the unusual dune vegetation, and the grand landscape of mountains and sand. From Laramie to Sinclair is 94 miles, all interstate highway. The distance from Sinclair to the Ferris Dunes is shorter (50-60 miles), but will take nearly two hours. Once there, you will be within a short walk of the nearest plants, or you can really stretch your legs to visit plants on steep slopes habitat. (*Penstemon haydenii* photo courtesy of Bonnie Heidel)



Schedule

Friday – Berry Biodiversity Conservation Center

Board meeting 1-3

Registration 3-5

Happy hour and hors d'oeuvres 5-6

6pm - Speaker (Dennis Knight)

Be sure to enjoy the green roof!

Saturday

Early morning - gather for field trips

Return from trips around 4 or 5

Happy hour 5:30-6:30

6:45 - 7:30 banquet – University of Wyoming Student Center

7:45 - Speaker (Craig Freeman) – Berry Biodiversity Conservation Center

Announcements

Sunday

Early morning - gather for field trips

Return from trips around 4 or 5

Informal and non-scheduled meeting somewhere in Laramie

Speaker - Stephen Love - preview of next year

Dine at a local restaurant

Monday

Optional field trip to Ferris Dunes, the site of *Penstemon haydenii*.

REGISTRATION

The registration form is available on the APS website and on the following pages in this newsletter.

Registration forms may be mailed with payment, or if you prefer, online registration is available on the website. We will be limiting the number of guests to 90 attendees so sign up early!

NEXT

In the next issue of the newsletter we will profile some of the Penstemons we expect to see and will also update field trip information.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

APS/WNPS MEETING AND FIELD TRIPS – JUNE 22-24, 2012

The annual event this year is based in Laramie, Wyoming with field trips to the surrounding plains and mountains. Meetings and gatherings will be on the University of Wyoming Campus in the Berry Biodiversity Conservation Center. We will offer three, day-long field trips this year. As usual, we encourage car pooling. There are two registration levels this year, differentiated by whether or not one is attending the Saturday dinner. The banquet choices will be either roast chicken or grilled salmon. Registration is restricted to members of the American Penstemon Society and/or the Wyoming Native Plant Society. We accept checks or Money Orders (no cash please). Those wishing to pay by credit card or PayPal may do so on the APS website at <http://apsdev.org>.

Details of the Saturday and Sunday field trips can be found in the newsletter and on the APS website. Please see the details in the newsletter and/or on the APS website (<http://apsdev.org>). The trip to the Snowy Range and Saratoga will include access to a private ranch and because the owner will be opening the gate once per day, we ask that those on this trip please travel *en masse*. Also, we will be limiting the number of folks on each of the field trips to approximately 30/day/trip. We will do our best to assign you to your desired field trip destinations but make no guarantees. Whether you opt to mail in your registration or register online, please be sure to include your field trip preferences. You will be assigned to a field trip on Saturday and one on Sunday.

In addition to the field trips on Saturday and Sunday, the Wyoming Native Plant Society is hosting a Monday, June 25th trip to the *Penstemon haydenii* location at Ferris Dunes. You will want to make this part of your itinerary!



REGISTRATION FORM
APS MEETING AND FIELD TRIPS - JUNE 22-24, 2012

NAME (1)		
STREET ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP
PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS:	
<input type="checkbox"/> INCLUDE ONLY MY NAME IN THE PARTICIPANT LIST		
EMERGENCY CONTACT		
HEALTH ISSUES?		
BANQUET SELECTION		
<input type="checkbox"/> CHICKEN		
<input type="checkbox"/> SALMON		
REGISTRATION LEVEL (CHECK ONE)		
<input type="checkbox"/> \$130 (includes Saturday Banquet)		
<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 (No Banquet please)		
PREFERRED FIELD TRIPS (PICK 2)		
<input type="checkbox"/> LARAMIE RANGE		
<input type="checkbox"/> SNOWY MOUNTAINS /SARATOGA		
<input type="checkbox"/> DODGE MOUNTAIN		
DO YOU INTEND TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MONDAY OPTIONAL TRIP?		
<input type="checkbox"/> YES		
<input type="checkbox"/> NO		

Note – fill one form per attendee. You may send a single check for the total registration fee.

NAME (2)		
STREET ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP
PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS:	
<input type="checkbox"/> INCLUDE ONLY MY NAME IN THE PARTICIPANT LIST		
EMERGENCY CONTACT		
HEALTH ISSUES?		
BANQUET SELECTION		
<input type="checkbox"/> CHICKEN		
<input type="checkbox"/> SALMON		
REGISTRATION LEVEL (CHECK ONE)		
<input type="checkbox"/> \$130 (includes Saturday Banquet)		
<input type="checkbox"/> \$100 (No Banquet please)		
PREFERRED FIELD TRIPS (PICK 2)		
<input type="checkbox"/> LARAMIE RANGE		
<input type="checkbox"/> SNOWY MOUNTAINS /SARATOGA		
<input type="checkbox"/> DODGE MOUNTAIN		
DO YOU INTEND TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MONDAY OPTIONAL TRIP?		
<input type="checkbox"/> YES		
<input type="checkbox"/> NO		

Total Payment Amount Enclosed: \$_____ (make checks payable to **American Penstemon Society**)

Please mail the registration form (this page) and payment to

Hugh MacMillan
1367 Cathedral Rock Drive
Sedalia, CO 80135

APPLICATIONS BEING SOUGHT FOR SPECIAL PROJECT GRANTS

The purpose of the APS Special Projects Program is to stimulate activities that promote knowledge and appreciation of Penstemons. The Society is particularly interested in funding projects that:

- 1) Promote conservation of Penstemon species in the wild, especially rare or sensitive ones, through understanding of factors that affect their survival, and
- 2) Promote appreciation for the diversity and beauty of Penstemons in domestic landscapes, through horticultural research, dissemination of information of interest to gardeners, or the construction or enhancement of educational display gardens.

All applicants must be current members of APS, and may join APS for the purpose of submitting a proposal. Maximum award amount is \$1000; in the past three years, awards have ranged from \$200 to \$1000. Awards are not intended to pay wages or travel to meetings. The number of successful awards in any year will be determined by the number of high-quality proposals, value of the awards, and the annual budget. Awardees are required to submit a final project report, due one year after the award is made, and provide either an article for the newsletter or an oral presentation at an annual meeting.

Proposal Format

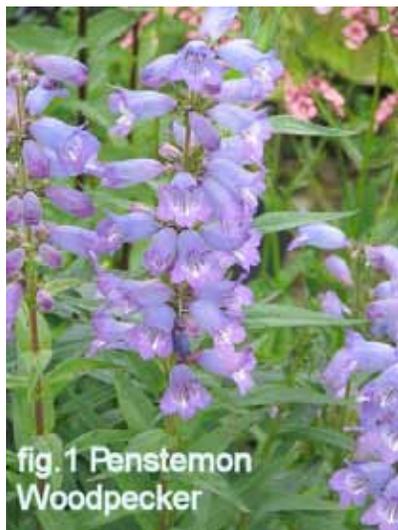
Proposals should not exceed five pages, and must follow this format:

1. Project name
2. Name and contact information of submitter(s)
3. Requested funding amount
4. Objective of the project
5. Background and rationale
6. Proposed methods and timeline
7. Itemized budget
8. Description of submitters' qualifications

Submit proposals to Dorothy Tuthill via email (dtuthill@uwyo.edu) or mail (Berry Biodiversity Conservation Center, Dept. 4304, University of Wyoming, 1000 E. University Ave., Laramie, WY 82071) no later than March 31, 2012. Receipt of proposals will be acknowledged by email, and successful awardees will be notified no later than April 30, with disbursements made in early May.

PENSTEMONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Being new to the society I thought I'd write a quick article on *Penstemon* in the UK. I don't know how many other Brits belong to the APS, or other northern Europeans for that matter, but I for one could do with some guidance on the subject.



Talk to the average gardener in the UK and they tend only to be familiar with what used to be called “bedding penstemons” because they were too tender to survive the winter and were raised fresh from cuttings in Autumn. These are hybrids of mostly southern and Mexican species as far as I can tell. Varieties like ‘Garne’t, ‘Sour Grapes, ‘Blackbird’, ‘Windsor Red’, ‘Purple Bedder’, ‘Evelyn’ and many more are common over here (fig. 1).

I'm not sure how well American growers know them, but they're very popular here for providing colour through much of the summer into autumn as long as the frost keeps off.

Beyond these though, most UK gardeners would struggle to name many others. A few of the eastern species like *P.digitalis*, *hirsutus* and *smallii* and some Mexican species like *P.kunthii*, *isophyllus* and *hartwegii* are commonly available. Some “alpine” species are popular with enthusiasts, in particular those in the Subgenus *Dasanthera* (especially *newberryi* and *davidsonii* -the latter often sold as *roezlii*). Some from Subgenus *Penstemon*, Section *Proceri* (mainly *P.procerus* in various forms, and *confertus*) are easy to grow in this area.

Besides these, *P.barbatus*, *heterophyllus* (fig. 3) and *pinifolius* are very well known here and can each be obtained in several forms but there's remarkably little else either mentioned reliably in the literature or offered for sale on a regular basis. I think most UK growers would be astonished to find that there are over 270 species in the wild, and amazed to see the sheer diversity of habit and flowering. They'd be doubly amazed to know that so many of these are completely cold hardy and particularly excited to see some of those blues! I've been a very keen gardener for nigh-on 30 years now and I only twigged a couple of years back.

Now there may be a good reason for this obscurity. It might be that all the other *penstemons* are just useless here. Obviously it is not a matter of cold hardiness – most will tolerate a lot more frost than the bedding hybrids we grow- but maybe there's something else. The trouble is that the horticultural literature records only the plants people succeed with. There's no way of knowing which have been tried and failed, and which simply haven't been tried. A quick hunt through my bookshelves produces only a few scraps of information.

Besides those mentioned above, G.S.Thomas¹ mentions *P.strictus* and *ovatus* (“thrives in any sunny reasonably drained soil”). Phillips and Rix² give us an eclectic selection including *palmeri*, *glaber*, *clutei*, *centranthifolius*, *jamesii*, *baccharifolius*, *whippleanus*, *superbus*, *ovatus* and *strictus*, mostly described as ‘hardy to -10C if dry’. Ingwersen³ offers a long list of possibles, but

cheerfully admits that he doesn't really know what he's talking about. Graham Nicholls⁴ gives the most encouraging review, with plenty of first-hand experience growing *penstemons* in his garden near Bath, Somerset. His list is extensive and I won't repeat it here – suffice it to say, besides a selection of those mentioned above, some unlikely members of the Subgenus *Penstemon*, Section *Cristati* (eg *grahamii* and *janishiae*) and *Caespitosi* (eg. *acaulis* and *caespitosus*) are included and deemed perfectly growable, given the right conditions. (I'll come back to what that means later on.) The only article in *The Plantsman*⁵ (at least since 1994) was on DNA markers for classifying hybrids.

The Plant Finder⁶ (the main gazetteer of nurseries in the UK) lists quite a number of species each year but many of them seem to come and go quickly. To give an idea, in the current on-line edition, besides the well-known species mentioned above, there are about 40 taxa (species and subspecies) listed. Well over half get just one entry and are probably one-offs. (When I've



fig. 2
P. cyananthus?

enquired in the past they've often been out of production and the nursery owners simply haven't updated their lists.) Ten growers give three or more entries and the highest has nine. The most widely available are (in descending order) *P. glaber*, *grandiflorus*, *strictus*, *serrulatus*, *ovatus*, *whippleanus*, *virgatus*, *virens*, *linarioides*, *hallii* and *euglaucus*.

To make matters worse, what is offered, I've found, is often incorrectly labelled. I've had something labelled *P. cyananthus* v. *utahensis* (another species entirely) from a very well-respected nursery (fig. 2), a small *procerus* labelled 'campanulatus', and an



fig. 3 *Penstemon*
cf *barbatus*

'eatonii' which turned out to be the relatively familiar *P. barbatus* (or something very like it - fig. 3).

The seed merchants and exchanges are no better. Somebody routinely sends out something of the *P. serrulatus* kind (fig. 7) under a whole lot of more interesting names. Since the nurserymen often don't know any better, these impostors can turn up on sale, exacerbating the problem. I don't know if this is a problem peculiar to *Penstemon*. Perhaps *Iris* or *Primula* enthusiasts have the same problem but in any case, it's why I've joined the APS – to get hold of properly identified seed.

Growing Conditions

I'm aware of course that the natural habitats of many *Penstemon* are about as different from the UK as you can get – extremely hot and dry with rain only occasionally in the summer. What I perhaps need to make clear to North American readers is how varied our climate is over here. It's a common misconception that the British climate is uniformly wet and cold (and it often seems that way). This approximates our west coast (Devon, Cornwall, Wales, and western Scotland)

and if I lived over there I probably wouldn't even be trying to grow more *penstemons*. I'd grow Himalayan *Primula* and *Meconopsis*, which do well over there but are useless here.

Things are quite different in the eastern side of the UK (East Anglia, and Sussex/Kent - where I am). In some places the rainfall, believe it or not, is comparable with the Middle East (but without the heat so less evaporation). I was astonished when I came across the stats, but "In some years rainfall totals in Essex and South Suffolk can be below 450 millimetres (17.7 in). Especially areas around Colchester, Clacton and Ipswich have less than the average annual rainfall in Jerusalem, Beirut and even some semi-arid parts of the world" (Wikipedia)

We do get rain at all times of year though, and unpredictable frosts and snow, which I guess would make a difference to very seasonal plants. If we stuck to plants from the same climate as ours we'd never try any Himalayan plants (because we have no monsoon), or Spanish plants (because we don't have a searing dry summer), or alpines (because we have no regular snow cover.) In fact we grow a wide variety of the above employing nothing more elaborate than a raised bed and an awareness of micro-climates.

Other "Wild West" plants have lately become popular among keen gardeners here – in particular some *Yucca*, *Dasylyrion*, *Nolina* and *Agave*, and quite a number of *Salvia* and *Agastache*. From the Pacific Northwest winter rainfall areas an astonishing variety of unlikely plants are common and easy in gardens here including various *Ceanothus*, *Fremontodendron*, *Zauschneria* and *Lyonothamnus*. They are less cold tolerant perhaps, but don't mind winter wet.



In any case, my understanding is that plant collectors look for populations on the edges of their distributions to take advantage of the plants' natural variations. For example, *Hedychium* collected from as high up in the Himalayas as possible grows here. Among the more dry-climate groups, it might make sense to go for species with a wide natural distribution, rather than very narrow endemics. I also think there's a certain amount of natural selection that goes on in cultivation (or inadvertent artificial selection) whereby we raise loads of seed and sooner or later a hardy clone arises.

It's probably how hitherto difficult species 'suddenly' and unaccountably become common in gardens - not because we've worked out their secrets.

Work in progress

My experiments with *penstemon* species are very much in their infancy. I've bought a few plants over the years, including a gorgeous, unidentified Subgenus *Saccanthera* that turned up unexpectedly in a High Street shop (fig. 5) but which gradually died away. (Ed. Note: It looks like *P. heterophyllus* from N.California; it's sold under cultivar names



as ‘Zuriblau’ and ‘True Blue’ and is not long-lived.) I got *P.teucroides* and planted it in a big pan that sat out all last winter and although it’s not flowered yet it seems strong. I’ve bought other species from various nurseries, but many have rotted in their pots before I’ve had a chance to plant them out. I can’t help thinking that the peaty compost they use here might explain a lot of the problems. I use something more like cactus compost – loamy with a lot of gritty sand for my own seedlings. (Ed. Note: **Many pensts grow in lime-based soils which explains the “sudden death”. I add lime or dissolved lime to beds and troughs).**)



A couple of years back, I bought seed of a lot of what now seem unlikely candidates just because they looked amazing. I’ve never had much difficulty getting *penstemon* seed to germinate and grow on. Indeed the seedlings seem very robust generally, but things can get difficult later. I’ve had *P. palmeri*, and *spectabilis* flower in their pots, but not looking well. A lot of UK growers complain that species *penstemons* tend to die after flowering. *P.grandiflorus* grows, but hasn’t flowered yet. *P. superbus* flowered beautifully and looked like coming back for more (fig. 6). *Keckiella cordifolia*, *ternata* and *antirrhinoides* (pre-penstemons) seem to be coming along fairly well too.

I have batches of baby *P. cyananthus*, *comarrhenus*, *hallii*, *roezlii*, *speciosus*, *aridus* and *crandallii* in 3 inch pots now in the polytunnel which sat out in the rain through last summer without trouble. I wouldn’t want to risk them out in the open right now in February. None are big enough to flower yet, but they



came from RMRP (now closed) or Alplains nurseries so should be correctly identified at least.

The most successful, predictably enough, have been those rogue *P.Serrulatus* (fig. 7), and the *P. albertinus* (fig. 8).

Hopes for the future

This is where I want to ask for help. I’m setting up a small nursery in Sussex (<http://brightonplants.blogspot.com/>), growing a wide range of more or less rare plants but I’d really like to specialise in *penstemon* and *asclepias* species. I have Robert Nold’s “Penstemons” book⁷ and have done a lot more research online so my choices will, I hope, be a bit better informed now.

A few groups besides the obvious Proceri and Dasanthera look promising, most obviously the Humiles and the Serrulati. Two odd high altitude species – *P.harbourii* and *tracyi* seem worth

investigating (Graham Nicholls found the latter disappointing but easily growable and needing a lot of water.) I wonder also about some of the Subgenus *Saccanthera* and *Habroanthus*? And what about *Nothochelone*? (**Ed. note: this grows at woodland edges and might like your peaty mix on a slope.**)

There may even be some more adaptable types among Sections *Caespitosi*, *Peltanthera*, *Coerulei*, *Cristati* and other desert groups. Clearly they will need the best possible drainage and the maximum possible exposure to sun and air (especially in winter). I'm thinking a raised bed made up almost entirely of some sort of grit would be the way to go, but how much feeding do they need? Nicholls⁴ tends to classify his species according to whether they are best on a rockery or scree (50:50 compost/grit in a sunny spot) or a 'xeric' raised bed (a sand bed in the sunniest spot available, possibly with some overhead cover from rain in winter). The smaller ones he recommends for a trough, and a very small minority only for the alpine house. Bear in mind that the average annual rainfall in Bath is about 900mm (33"). Here in Sussex (average annual rainfall about 600mm, 20") the chalk Downlands are exceptionally free-draining, but very alkaline (pH >8.5 in places). Nold⁷ recommends alkaline soils for all *Penstemon* except the *Dasanthera*, but this might be a bit extreme. (Bedding *penstemon* grow fine on it by the way.)

So I wonder, have other APS members – perhaps especially European members had good experiences with *penstemon* species in areas of unpredictable rainfall and less than brilliant sunshine? I'd be very interested in any insights anyone might have to offer.

Thanks, Steve Law

Brighton Plants, Sussex, England

References

1. Thomas, Graham Stuart (1990) **Perennial Garden Plants**. J M Dent
2. Phillips, Roger, and Rix, Martyn (1991) **Perennials volume 2, Late Perennials**. Pan Books Ltd
3. Ingwersen, Will (1978) **Manual of Alpine Plants**. Cassell
4. Nicholls, Graham (2002) **Alpine Plants of North America**. Timber Press
5. Toomey, Nicola and Culham, Alastair (2006) **Penstemon: developing DNA markers for the identification of cultivars**. *The Plantsman*, vol.5 pp. 52-58
6. **RHS Plant Finder** <http://apps.rhs.org.uk/rhsplantfinder/>
7. Nold, Robert (1999) **Penstemons**. Timber Press

Steve has asked us some great questions. I couldn't help jumping in a few times with editor's comments. Please help him out by going to the Blog on the website: APSdev.org. and let's get some good conversations rolling. Editor Ginny

Membership renewal

The American Penstemon Society involves almost 400 penstemon aficionados world-wide, many of whom will enjoy meeting other APS members and traveling to Laramie, Wyoming for our annual meeting on June 22 -24, 2012. Dues include our newsletter (with a notice sent to our members electronically and posted on our website), annual bulletin and the annual seed exchange. Dues run on a calendar basis, renewed at the first of each year.

US and Canadian dues \$15 US; Elsewhere \$20 US. Dues for students are \$5. Life Membership is \$150. In addition, members may pay two years in advance and receive the third year free. Please do not send cash.

You may pay either by check or by PayPal on our website at www.apsdev.org. Make checks payable to American Penstemon Society.

Mail to:

Dale Lindgren/Phoebe McFarlane, Membership Secretaries
9202 Maloney Drive
North Platte, NE 69101

If you wish to contact Dale Lindgren and/or Phoebe McFarlane, they can be reached at aps.membership@yahoo.com. Please update any current info with new phone numbers or e-mail addresses. Thanks for your enthusiastic support of the Society

Name _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Cell phone _____

E-Mail _____

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

Remember, if you plan to attend the exciting meetings in Wyoming , your membership needs to be up to date. Also, if you have changed your e-mail address lately, please send this information to the Membership Chairmen at aps.membership@yahoo.com. Thank you.

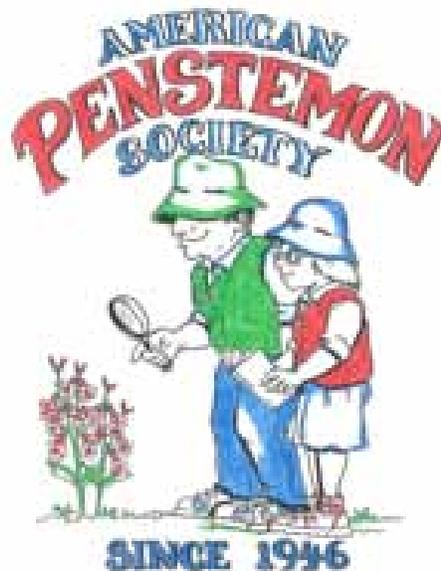
A NOTE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMEN

We think that a review of our membership rules and timing of dues payment is in order. Those of you who have paid for more than one year of dues will be members in good standing until December 31 of the final year paid. Others who pay only a single year at a time need to renew before the end of that year. According to our APS Bylaws, dues are due on or before January 1 of each year and are past due on May 1. We have recently dropped all members who had not paid dues for 2011. We hope that those of you who haven't paid for 2012 will do so promptly in order to remain on our roster.

Remember, you need to have your dues current to attend our exciting meetings this June 22-24 in Laramie, Wyoming. If you have questions please send them to – APS.Membership@yahoo.com or to Phoebe McFarlane, 5609 So. Locust St., Greenwood Village, CO 80111 or denvrbob@gmail.com.

Stephen Love, the editor of our APS Bulletin, has said that the publisher will include the date of membership expiration on each member's address label in the future. Hopefully, this will aid in helping members keep track of their membership.

Louise Parsons, our Seed Exchange Chair, has taken on the responsibility for redoing the APS ad in the NARGS Quarterly which was badly out of date. Louise said, "I have endeavored to create one that doesn't become so readily dated". The ad is quite attractive. Thank you, Louise.



APS NEW AND LIFE MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2011 THROUGH MID FEBRUARY 2012

Life Members

Three members – two continuing and one new – have become Life Members! They are Janet Novak of Philadelphia, PA; Margaret Wolf of Loveland, CO; and new member Remy Lubbe of the Netherlands. Thank you for your support of APS.

New members

Please welcome the following new members. We are glad to have you!

Adam Burch
Thornton, CO

Casey Delphia
Bozeman, MT

Eric Eldredge
Fallon, Nevada

Thomas Fischer
Portland, OR

Remy Lubbe
Noordwijkerhout
Netherlands

Jae McIntyre
Tehachapi, CA

John Myers
Gaston, OR

Joyce Pence
Clark Fork, ID 83811

Marian Selby
Potet
Pays de la Loire
France

Colleen Taylor
McArthur, CA

Loretta Todd
Boise, Idaho

Grahame Ware
Ladysmith, British Columbia
Canada

Deceased member
Jeanne Schmitt,
Columbus, OH

New Editor for the APS Newsletter **The Penstemaniac**

Introducing Ginny Maffitt, the new newsletter editor, struggling to fill Mike Evan's able boots. I'm hoping you will let me know if you would like to write an article on some aspect of penstemaniania for the future newsletters. It doesn't have to be very long and I'll be happy to help you edit or add a photo.

I live in Sherwood, Oregon, zone 8a. We have exactly one very rare penstemon in Washington County that oddly enough, grows in true wetlands. In the next county (which mostly is occupied by the million-plus citizens of Portland) are *P. rupicola*, *cardwellii*, *ovatus*, and *serrulatus*, growing on cliffs in east county at the west edge of the Columbia Gorge. We grow our favorites by piling gravel and sand on top of the heavy clay left behind by the Missoula Floods, which is all worth it when they bloom!

In mid-February, our snow-possibilities at low elevations are done; temperatures are in the 50's during the day and mid-30's at night, so the flowers begin! I send you a spring greeting in the form of a native evergreen from the southern coast of Oregon now blooming in my garden. It is the silk tassel shrub, *Garrya elliptica*—enjoy! Ginny Maffitt



POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY 2012

APS Officers and Board Members for 2012 are listed below. They represent eight different states and The Netherlands. We appreciate their willingness to serve and hope that the membership will help them out when asked.

President: Val Myrick vkmyrick@pacbell.net

Vice President: Andrea Wolfe wolfe.205@osu.edu

Treasurer: Mary Cunningham APS.Treasurer@yahoo.com

Membership: Dale Lindgren and Phoebe McFarlane APS.Membership@yahoo.com

Board Position 1: Libby Wheeler glwheel@prodigy.net

Board Position 2: Eric Gouda e.j.gouda@uu.nl

Board Position 3 Gerald L. Klingaman, gklinga@uark.edu

Seed Exchange: Louise Parsons parsonl@peak.org

Bulletin: Steve Love slove@uidaho.edu

Website: Hugh MacMillan humanator@yahoo.com

Auditor: Ed Godleski e.godleski@csuohio.edu

Nominating: Dallas and Sharon Boge dalboge@juno.com

Special Projects: Dr. Dorothy E Tuthill, DTuthill@uwyo.edu

Past President: Bob McFarlane denverbob@aol.com

Historian: Dale Lindgren dlindgren1@unl.edu

Registrar of Cultivars and Hybrids Dr. Dale Lindgren, dlindgren1@uni.edu

Librarian: Dr. Stephen Love, slove@uidaho.edu

Custodian of Slide Collection: Dr. Dale Lindgren, dlindgren1@unl.edu

Newsletter: Ginny Maffitt, maffitt6540@comcast.net