

12/6/11

McNeal Growers

There are 249 species of Penstemons and 388 taxa. Most are native to western North America. Many of those are mountainous species. Over the Years I tried to grow these stunning plants here in central Texas. If you go to some trouble and fuss over them you can get many of them to grow here. That trouble means that they are not care free and require special treatment which costs money and resources. So even though most are drought tolerant, our summer rain fall can kill them. Since many are mountainous species they can't stand up in our heat either.

After many years of disappointment I stopped trying to grow them except for our local species. Such as *Penstemon cobaea*, *P. triflorus*, *P. bracharifolius* and *P. tenuis*. We have some other hill country penstemons I am still looking for.

I have had another idea. There are a few *Penstemon* species that grow in the eastern US. Those should be habituated to summer rainfall and heat. So this year we are growing a few of those. Take a Look.

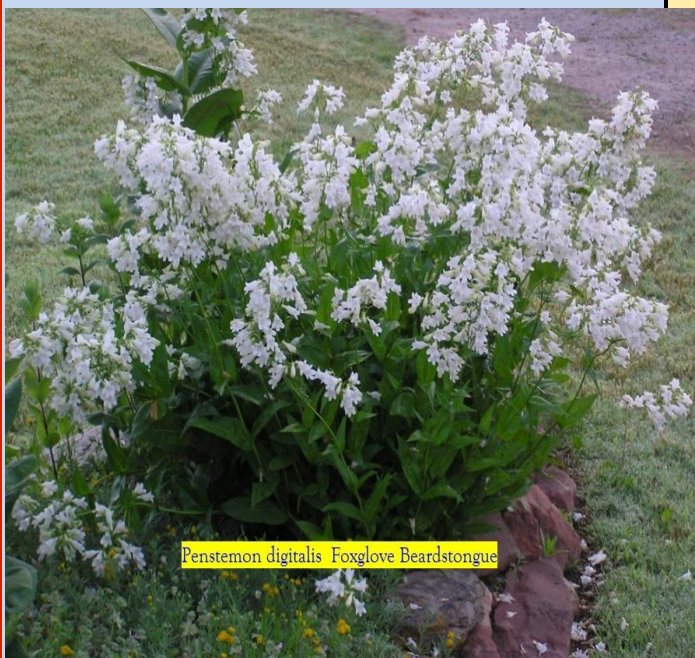
Below is a list of them.

Penstemon calycosus; Calico Beardstongue.

This is one of the taller Penstemons. It can get to over 3 feet tall. It likes to grow in part shade on the woods edge. It does like extra water so plant it where to soil is deep in areas with other water friendly plants like beauty berry. It blooms in late spring through early summer with pink to lavender flowers.



Penstemon calycosus Calico Beardstongue



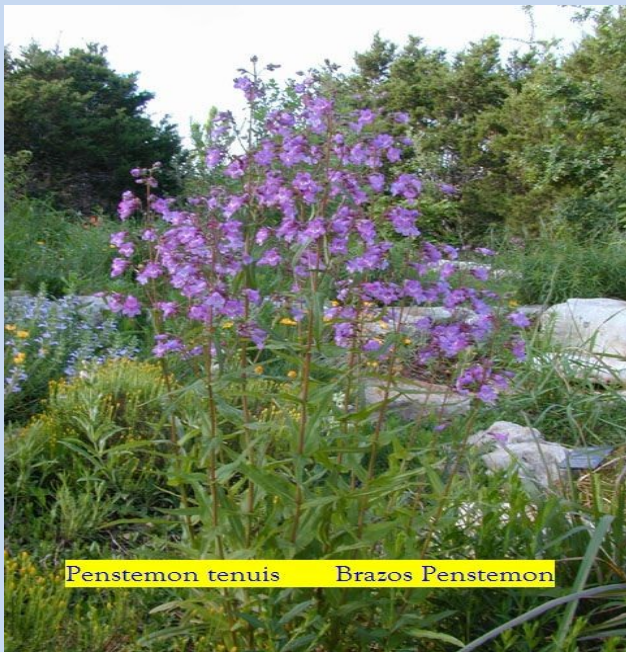
Penstemon digitalis Foxglove Beardstongue

Penstemon digitalis, Foxglove Beardstongue;

This is one of the biggest Penstemons in the east. It can get 3 feet tall and the same around. It wants to be in part shade in our heat. It can stand Blackland soils so it would be a good plant for the eastern side of Austin. In a normal year it might need watering once a month in the summer.

It has long bloom period for a spring bloomer. The flowers are big and white with some light pink tints.

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Penstemon tenuis Brazos Penstemon

Penstemon tenuis, Brazos Penstemon;

What a great color! It is sort of iridescent lavender-blue. The blooms are on nice tall stalks above the foliage so the flowers stand out in the garden.

Like the other eastern Penstemons it can stand water and clay soils so it can do well in prairie soils where lots of other perennials suffer.

It likes part shade and moister soil. It is a good choice for areas that are low lying and wet. They also bloom for months starting in the late Spring. They are very easy to grow and when they are happy they produce abundant seed that spread around the yard.

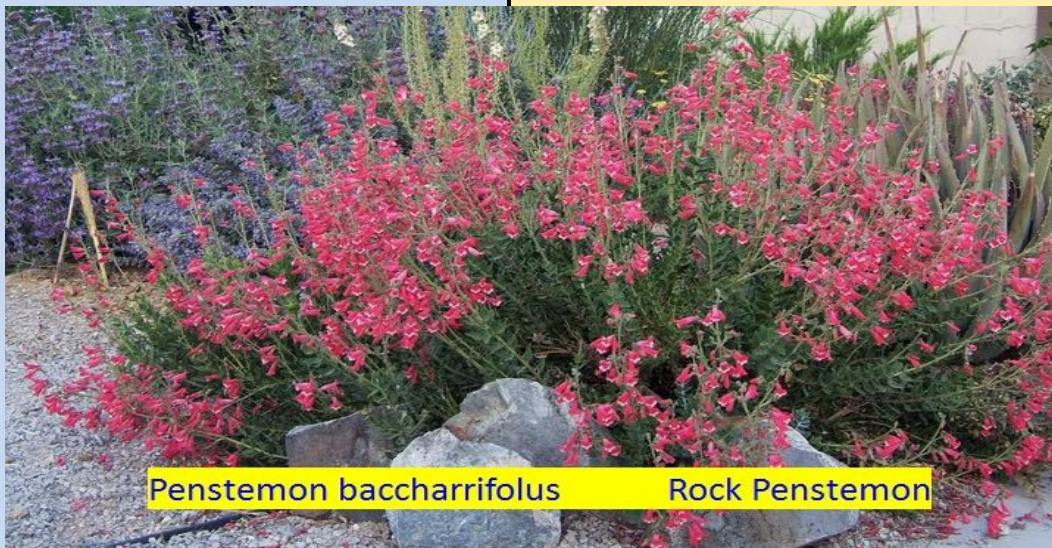


Penstemon hirsutus Hairy Foxglove

Penstemon hirsutus, Hairy Foxglove;

Hairy Foxglove is one of the narrow flowered Penstemon, more like a honeysuckle flower. Hairy Foxglove is another 3 foot perennial that like the edge of woodlands and deep soil.

The flowers are whitish to pink and it blooms for 2-3 months in the late spring depending on how fast the summer heat comes on. This another great species for planning in shade and moister, heavy clay.



Penstemon baccharifolus Rock Penstemon

Penstemon baccharifolus, Rock Penstemon;

One of the most spectacular native perennials in the Hill Country. It likes to grow in crevices of rocks and can be found in the rock holes on vertical cliff faces. It is a low growing mounding plant that rarely gets more than 2 feet tall. The green parts of the plant are somewhat succulent and the lower parts are woody like a shrub. It can take full sun and summer heat. It has bright red flowers that really stand out in it's rocky habitat. Don't plant it in poorly drained soil like clay. Make sure it has excellent drainage. Once it gets established it is care free and will live for years.



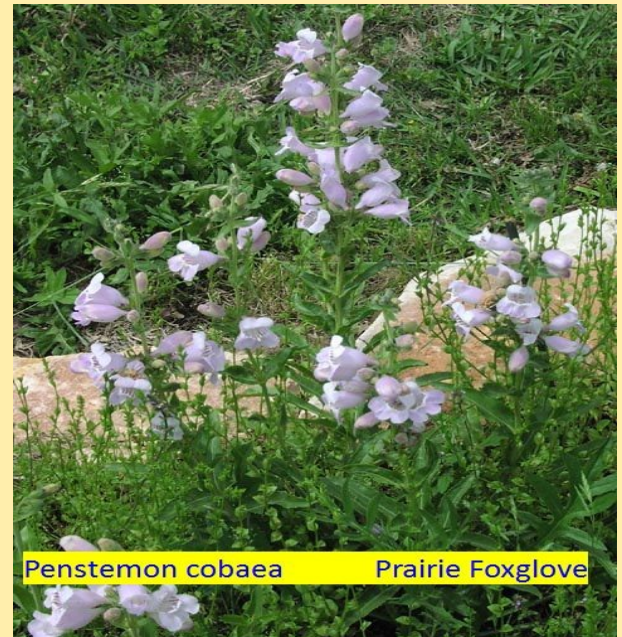
Penstemon cobaea Prairie Foxglove

Penstemon cobaea, Prairie Foxglove;

You can find this species spread over the southern Plains in undisturbed grasslands. It grows well in full sun and black land soil. It doesn't grow much west of the Hill country so it can stand some water in the summer. It blooms in the late spring and lasts about a month. In the hill country the flowers are mostly pale pink to almost white but as you travel east you find more and more are darker pink to lavender. The live for many years and the clumps get bigger each season with more and more flower stalks as they age, ultimately you can have plants that have up to 20 flower stalks per plants.



Penstemon triflorus Scarlet Penstemon



Penstemon cobaea Prairie Foxglove

Penstemon triflorus, Scarlet Penstemon;

Scarlet penstemon is only found in the hill country in open grassy areas. You can find it on road sides out in ranching country. In the wild each plant has only a few flower stalks but in the garden you can get 8-10 flower stalks per plants. It likes dry, sunny sites and doesn't do as well in wet areas with thick clay. Make sure you have good drainage like on a slope. The soil doesn't have to be too rich, it will grow right in the native soil.

Scarlet penstemon of course has beautiful tubular scarlet flowers that can be seen at a good distance. In a garden they can be in the background because they are so bright they stand out. Once they are established they are pretty care



Penstemon triflorus Scarlet Penstemon