

1-2009

Firecracker Penstemon in the Landscape

Heidi Kratsch
Utah State University

Graham Hunter

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cwel_extension

 Part of the [Horticulture Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kratsch, Heidi and Hunter, Graham, "Firecracker Penstemon in the Landscape" (2009). *CWEL Extension Fact Sheets*. Paper 13.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cwel_extension/13

This Factsheet is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in CWEL Extension Fact Sheets by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact dylan.burns@usu.edu.





Firecracker Penstemon in the Landscape

Heidi Kratsch, Extension Ornamental Horticulture Specialist

Graham Hunter, Research Associate, Center for Water Efficient Landscaping

Penstemon eatonii

Firecracker penstemon



Graham Hunter

Description: Bright scarlet flowers that shower from arching stems of firecracker penstemon have made this plant a favorite of many penstemon enthusiasts. The species is found throughout the West at elevations from 3,000 to 11,000 feet. It is adaptable to various soil textures but thrives in low-fertility soils. Like most penstemon species, its roots require excellent soil drainage. The bright red tubular flower makes it a favorite nectar source for hummingbirds. The common name for penstemon is ‘beardtongue’, named for the infertile stamen that protrudes from the flower and looks like a hairy tongue. Firecracker penstemon is cold-hardy all over the Intermountain West, and preliminary common garden trials indicate that seed source should not influence its hardiness.

Cultural Requirements:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| • Native Habitat | Widely distributed throughout the West. |
| • Soil | Well drained, low fertility, pH 7.0-8.0 |
| • Cold Tolerance | Zones 3 - 7 |
| • Drought Tolerance | High |
| • Salt Tolerance | Unknown |
| • Sun/Shade Preference | Full sun to part shade |
| • Propagation | Seed, stem cuttings, or division |

- Maintenance Do not over-water or over-fertilize. Reseeds freely, so clip stalks after final bloom to prevent spreading.
- Problems Susceptible to lodging (stalks fall over) and root rot diseases if over-watered.

Landscape Value:

- Use in the Landscape Borders, accents, rock gardens; often recommended as cut flowers.
- Foliage Basal leaves are ovate, upper leaves are opposite and lanceolate and slightly curled.
- Inflorescence Showy. Will re-bloom if spent flowers are removed.

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct
• Color							

- Fruit (seedheads) Capsule
- Form Clumping, erect, few to many stems
- Texture Medium
- Ultimate Size 10-40 inches
- Rate of Growth Medium to fast; flowers in second year.
- Plant Community Most communities from subalpine to salt desert shrub.
- Availability “Utah’s Choice” selection; (visit <http://www.utahschoice.org/natives/wheretobuy> for more information).
- Cultivars ‘Richfield Selection’

Propagation: To start seed indoors, cold-moist stratify for up to 112 days, and sow into container to a depth of 1/8 inch. For sowing seed outdoors, sow seed in fall and cover with 1/8 inch soil. Pre-soaking seed with 500 ppm gibberellic acid (GA) prior to cold-stratification may improve germination rate. Division of mature plants may be done in spring or fall.

Additional Photos:



USU Herbarium

References:

Mee, W., J. Barnes, R. Kjelgren, R. Sutton, T. Cerny, and C. Johnson. 2003.

Waterwise: Native Plants for Intermountain Landscapes. Utah State University Press, Logan, UT.

Utah Water-wise Plants (Utah Division of Water Resources). 2008. URL: <http://www.waterwiseplants.utah.gov>

USDA Plants Database. 2008. URL: <http://plants.usda.gov>

Baskin, C. C. and J.M. 2002. Propagation protocol for production of container *Penstemon eatonii* Gray plants; University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. In: Native Plant Network. URL:

<http://www.nativeplantnetwork.org> (accessed 2 January 2009). Moscow (ID): University of Idaho, College of Natural Resources, Forest Research Nursery.

This fact sheet belongs to a series of fact sheets about Intermountain West native trees, shrubs, perennials, and grasses called "Native Plants in the Landscape." Look for others in the series by visiting <http://extension.usu.edu/htm/publications>, then clicking on 'Horticulture' and 'Native Plants'.

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person otherwise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities.

This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle E. Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.