

Tohono Chul Park Greenhouse
7366 North Paseo del Norte – Tucson, AZ 85704 – 520-544-7922
www.tohonochulpark.org

PENSTEMON– *Penstemon spp.*

This pink penstemon grows near the Park's Sundial Plaza



Many gardeners in the Southwest design gardens to attract a variety of wildlife. Favorites with virtually all gardeners are hummingbirds. These tiny, bejeweled birds prefer tubular flowers in shades of red to orange to pink, though they have been known to visit purple ruellia and feathery fairy dusters. Penstemons, however, are a special favorite of hummers, and also make beautiful additions to your spring wildflower garden. Several species do very well in our dry deserts.

Plants from Seed – All penstemon species can be grown from seed and will re-seed themselves each year. Plant seeds in September-November (before Thanksgiving). Loosen the surface of the soil with a stiff rake to a depth of ¼ to ½ inch. Mix your seed with 4 parts soil, sand, mulch or sawdust to spread the seeds evenly. Lightly rake the seed into the soil in one direction so the seed dispersal remains even. Water daily, depending on temperature, until green sprouts

appear. Cut back watering as the plants establish. Feed with a water-based fertilizer such as Miracle-Gro, as often as every two weeks during the growing period and every week during bloom.

Light – Full sun.

Water – Most are moderately drought during tolerant, but do better with supplemental watering. During the hot summer months extra water will prevent dormancy in some species, other species will require it to stay alive. Be sure to choose a site with fast-draining soil and good air circulation.

Temperature – All species are hardy to 10° or lower.

Penstemon Species –

Penstemon barbatus (Bearded Penstemon) – dark green leaves; 2-4' scarlet flower spikes appear in late spring to summer; fast-growing

Penstemon pseudospectabilis (Canyon Penstemon) – pink flowers appear from March into early summer; requires supplemental water during hot water

Penstemon cardinalis (Cardinal Penstemon) – dark green leaves; 2-3' scarlet flower spikes appear generally from May to July; dormant during hot summer months, so cut back water.

Penstemon eatoni (Eaton's or Firecracker Penstemon) – evergreen subshrub; 2' scarlet flower spikes from later winter (February) into late spring (May); requires supplemental water during hot weather to prevent dormancy.

Penstemon superbus (Coral Penstemon) – 4-6' coral flower spikes appear from later February to May or even June; dormant in summer; flowers the first year from seed.

Penstemon parryi (Parry's Penstemon) – 3-5' dark pink flower spikes appear from February to May; dormant in summer; can flower the first year from seed; native to southern Arizona.