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Fall 2005

## Review of *Growing Penstemons: Species, Cultivars, and Hybrids* Compiled by Dale Lindgren and Ellen Wilde

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Weedon, Ronald, "Review of *Growing Penstemons: Species, Cultivars, and Hybrids* Compiled by Dale Lindgren and Ellen Wilde" (2005). *Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*. 771.  
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**Growing Penstemons: Species, Cultivars, and Hybrids.** Compiled by Dale Lindgren and Ellen Wilde. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2003. 149 pp. Illustrations, appendices, references. \$17.95 paper.

This book clearly appeals to those of us who never met a penstemon we didn't like. Everything about it is oriented to making the experiences of the penstemon traveler easier and a lot more enjoyable, starting with the color photographs on the book covers.

Beginning with a general introduction, the compilers proceed to a review of terminology with illustrations, then on to brief discussions of the various *Penstemon* species and their cultivars. These discussions include wild habitats. There are excellent chapters on hybrids, many of which are nicely described. Others

deal with selecting, growing, and caring for penstemons, along with methods of propagation. The appendices cover penstemons recommended for different parts of the country and lists of species found in each state or province in North America, including those found in National Parks and Monuments. There is an appendix devoted to classification. Others list public gardens where living plants can be seen, sources of seeds and plants, criteria for judging penstemons in flower shows, and a brief bibliography of other penstemon references. The lists of species found in the Great Plains are recorded by state: eight for South Dakota, ten for Nebraska, eleven for Kansas, and so on. The appendices by themselves insure reaching for the book again and again.

My personal acquaintance with the genus *Penstemon* in the Great Plains occurred primarily as a result of my friendship with Claude Barr. His *Jewels of the Plains* (1983) would still be an outstanding reference for penstemons in our region, though now out of print and not readily available.

There is a great deal to admire and little to complain about in *Growing Penstemons*. In the latter case, I wonder why the white-flowered form of *Penstemon haydenii* is not mentioned, when the species is such a special floral symbol of the Nebraska Sandhills. The authors only use the word “fragrant” to describe the floral odor, when that fragrance is actually spectacular and floral fragrance itself rare in penstemons.

Of some use is the companion *Penstemon Species Photo Portfolio*, sold separately. Also created as a companion piece is the CD *Penstemons: An Interactive Guide with Photos*, by William R. Gray (2003) available at [cyberflora@xmission.com](mailto:cyberflora@xmission.com) for \$25.00. This computer program offers over 800 photographs in remarkably good color, making the slides from the American Penstemon Society collection readily available to everyone with much of the information from the Lindgren-Wilde book alongside. Together, *Growing Penstemons* and its companions are wonderful additions to our enjoyment and study of the members of this genus. **Ronald R. Weedon**, *High Plains Herbarium, Chadron State College*.