

**SUBGENUS: *PENSTEMON***  
**SECTION: *Peltanthera***  
**Subsection: *Havardiani***

**CULTIVATION OF EACH SPECIES**  
**Table 17**

[subgenus]	<b>PENSTEMON</b>
[section]	<i>Ambigui</i> <i>Baccharifolii</i> <i>Chamaeleon</i> <i>Coerulei</i> <i>Cristati</i> <i>Ericopsis</i> <i>Fasciculus</i> <b><i>Peltanthera</i></b> <i>Penstemon</i>
[subsection]	<i>Centranthifolii</i> <b><i>Havardiani</i></b> <i>Peltanthera</i> <i>Petiolati</i>

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF PENSTEMONS IN THIS SECTION**

Large and tall, spectacularly beautiful. Many spires of pink to bright red flowers. Leaves in shades of gray or blue-green, leathery, and have a succulent look. All inhabit desert states of the southwest or parts of northern Mexico. Very drought tolerant. Easy to grow in poor soil; need bright sun. Not long-lived.<sup>12</sup>

**Location** northern Mexico north into desert part of the Intermountain Region, s. CA, e. to TX.

**Habitat** varies

**Foliage** herbaceous or suffrutescent (almost a shrub)

**Shape** stems are wand-like

**Leaves** evergreen, grey or blue-green color, glaucous (leaf surface covered with a fine, waxy powder), glabrous (smooth, hairless) thick, leathery; sometimes serrated (toothed edges); look succulent; often connate-perfoliate (joined at the base and surrounding a stem, as a pair of leaves; stem appears to have “pierced: through the leaf pair) ; stems and leaves of seedlings can be quite attractive in the winter, turning various colors of pink

<sup>1</sup> abstracted from Lindgren, Dale and Wilde, Ellen. 2003. “Growing Penstemons: Species, Cultivars and Hybrids.”  
and Way, David and James, Peter. 1998. “The Gardener’s Guide to Growing Penstemons.”



*Penstemon havardii* Photograph by Wynn Anderson  
Chihuahuan Desert Plants <http://museum.utep.edu/chih/gardens/plants/NtoQ/penstemonhavardii.htm>

**Plant in bloom**

**Corolla** (flower) pink to bright red  
**color** bright pink to bright red  
**size** large to very large  
**shape**

**Inflorescence** (arrangement of flowers along flowering stalk; all the flowers on the stalk): wand like  
**height** usually tall, 5-6'  
**shape** several stems, open

**Calyx** (sepals on underside of flower, collectively; outermost part of the flower)

**Cultivation needs** southern desert penstemons, or any penstemon blooming in February, March, or April need warm weather prior to bloom date and order to have enough growth to bloom; thus for those growing these species under cover, the cover should not be removed prematurely

**Ease of cultivation** easy in poor soils where it is dry most of the time

**Moisture** very drought tolerant; if over watered, will droop.

**Sun** need bright sun.

**Heat tolerance** yes

**Cold tolerance** tolerate fairly cold temperatures.

**Shade** no

**Soil** poor soil with low organic content.

**Drainage** yes

**Climate preference** hot, dry

**Longevity** short lived, but “must-have penstemons” (Lindgren, D. and Wilde, E. “Growing Penstemons Species, Cultivars and Hybrids”

**Interbreeding** natural hybrids within subsection *Peltanthera* are common

**Cuttings**

**Display recommendations** dryland garden or border

**Pollinated by** Most penstemons are visited by several bee species including honeybees and bumblebees. While hummingbirds prefer red penstemons, they commonly are seen at most penstemon species. Species wasps (*Pseudomasarid* ssp), and sphinx moths are known to be attracted to penstemons in this subsection..

## Species

*havardii*

*murrayanus*

*rotundifolius*

**Table 17. *Penstemon Peltanthera Havardiani***

**Key**

Column 1 SPECIES: species name; plant height when in bloom; color(s) of flower; fill in lavender  =popular; parenthesis = not reported in cultivation

Column 3 CULTIVATION SUGGESTIONS:

Row 1 SIZE OF FLOWER: **very large**= >1 ½ “ **large**=1-1 3/8” **medium**= ½ - 1” **small**= < ½ “

Row 2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Row 3: DISPLAY SUGGESTIONS

Row 4: WHERE SPECIES HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY CULTIVATED OUT OF NATIVE HABITAT



full sun



partial shade

Species	Bloom Season in Native Habitat	Cultivation Suggestions	Cultivation Needs			Elevation and Habitat	Distribution	Reported cold hardiness in cultivation
			Garden Soil	Moisture	Sun			
<i>havardii</i>	April-May	<p><b>large flower</b></p> <p>attractive; many stems; may bloom first year (did so in Denver 2007)</p> <p>attractive large leaves; glabrous, glaucous (smooth, gray-green)</p> <p>worth raising as an annual  <b>dryland garden; border</b>            cultivated in: Riverside, CA to Reno, NV, VA</p>	<p>porous; low in organic material</p> <p>pH 6.6-8.5 (neutral to alkaline)</p>	<p>seedlings appreciate regular moisture</p>	<p></p> <p></p>		<p>Trans Pecos , Big Bend region of w. TX</p> <p></p>	<p>did not survive - 20°F in Denver despite protection; has survived to 10° F</p> <p>zones 7a-9b,</p>

<p><b>murrayanus</b></p> <p>up to 6' coral-red</p> <p>EASY</p>	<p>July-Aug</p>	<p><b>very large flower</b> striking; long blooming, stems can be red-purple; blooms as a seedling in CO</p> <p>attractive unusual glabrous, glaucous (smooth and gray-green) foliage; leaves connate-perfoliate within the inflorescence</p> <p>mod. long lived; well liked; <b>dryland garden; border</b> cultivated in: NM, AZ, Midwest, MN, MI, VA, NY, CO; OH</p>	<p>fast draining</p>	<p>supplement in dry areas; tolerates more summer water than others in <i>Peltanthera</i></p>		<p>sandy soil, pine woods, open prairies</p>	<p>Ozarks, e TX, LA, OK, AR</p> 	<p>unknown</p>
<p>(<i>rotundifolius</i>) ~1' tall and twice as wide red</p>	<p>July-September</p>	<p><b>large flower</b> NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>rock cliffs</p>	<p>Chihuahua, Mexico</p>	<p>NA</p>

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*Penstemon murrayanus* seedling



*Penstemon murrayanus* seedling

for more photos go to:

1. this website, Library tab
2. <http://plants.usda.gov/gallery.html>
3. <http://botu07.bio.uu.nl/spgm-1.4.4/gal/Penstemon/index.php?name=Penstemon%20-%202034k>