

# THE PENSTEMANIAC

NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN PENSTEMON SOCIETY  
Volume No. 7, Issue No. 2 <http://apsdev.org> June 2013



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## Don't Miss Out!

Only six more weeks and we kick off the 2013 joint APS/INPS meeting in Boise, Idaho. On Friday, June 21st, we will open the meeting with a reception located at the Idaho Botanical Garden. There we will meet with new and old friends and wander through the world famous Lewis and Clark native plant gardens. This will be just the beginning to a fantastic week of visiting and botanizing. I only hope you are registered and we don't have to start without you.

The tours and other activities are coming together well. Saturday and Sunday field trips are scheduled for Mores Mountain in the Boise Range, Reynolds Creek in the Owyhee country, and Leslie Gulch in southeastern Oregon. We highly recommend that you participate in the after-meeting trip into Hell's Canyon. We have been out scouting the tour routes and, so far, things look good. Mother Nature has been a little stingy with precipitation in the southern part of the region (Reynolds Creek and Leslie Gulch) and that has us a little concerned. However, inspections of penstemons reveal that

early vegetative growth is good. I suspect this has to do with cool spring temperatures. As long as we get a little more rain along the way, field trips into those areas should be successful. No worries for the Mores Mountain and Hell's Canyon trips. Winter snowfall and spring rains in those areas have been plentiful. There will be flowers galore.

Registration is open and will continue until June 14th. We encourage you to get your name in the hat well before that time, if you can. But, if you make a last minute decision to attend, we certainly will welcome you with open arms.

Let me give you a little rundown on the schedule for the meeting. You can access more detailed information on both the APS and INPS websites.

### *Annual Meeting Schedule*

#### **Friday**

**1:00 pm** Board Meeting, APS (Owyhee Plaza Hotel)

**4:00 pm** Welcome reception at the Idaho Botanical Garden (food service begins at 6 pm). See [www.idahobotanicalgarden.org](http://www.idahobotanicalgarden.org) for directions.

## Saturday

All field trips depart from the parking lot located at 1511 W Bannock Street, Boise.

- 7:00 am** Depart on the tour to Succor Creek/Leslie Gulch
- 7:30 am** Depart on the tour to Reynolds Creek/Owyhee Mountains
- 8:00 am** Depart on the tour to Mores Mountain/Bogus Basin
- 6:00 pm** Reception (Owyhee Plaza Hotel)
- 7:00 pm** Banquet, annual business meetings (APS, INPS), keynote speaker (Owyhee Plaza Hotel)

## Sunday

All field trips depart from the parking lot located at 1511 W Bannock Street, Boise.

- 7:00 am** Depart on the tour to Succor Creek/Leslie Gulch
- 7:30 am** Depart on the tour to Reynolds Creek/Owyhee Mountains
- 8:00 am** Depart on the tour to Mores Mountain/Bogus Basin
- 7:00 pm** Social and slide show

## Monday

The field trip departs from the parking lot located at 1511 W Bannock Street, Boise.

- 6:00 am** Depart for the post-meeting tour to Hell's Canyon. Scheduled return time 6 pm.

There are a few things you will want to bring along on the field trips each day. Most of the field trips take us into places with limited access to food, water, or other essential equipment. If you are driving, be sure to start each field trip with a full tank of gas. Make sure you have a good spare tire. Lastly, be sure to bring the following on each field trip:

- Sack lunch
- Water (at least ½ gallon per person)
- Jacket
- Wide-brimmed hat
- Insect repellent
- Good hiking shoes
- *And remember your camera!*

We are going to do something unique at the meeting this year. As the meeting progresses, Tony McCammon, my University of Idaho colleague, will be collecting photographs from each of the meeting participants. On Sunday evening, along with our meal, we will enjoy a pictorial review of the meeting. So, please take lots of pictures and share the best ones with your fellow native plant enthusiasts.

Finally, be aware that due to decisions out of our control, we have had to make some changes in lodging arrangements. The Owyhee Plaza Hotel will not be accepting reservations for guest rooms. They will, however, host the business meetings on Friday and the meals and presentations scheduled for Saturday and Sunday evenings.

The Safari Inn (1070 W Grove Street, Boise, Idaho 1-208-344-6556) is helping us with lodging and is located just a block from the Owyhee Plaza.

Here are a couple of other relatively inexpensive motels that are located near the Owyhee Plaza:

Cabana Inn, 1600 Main Street, Boise, Idaho 1-208-343-6000

Budget Inn 2600 West Fairview Inn, Boise, Idaho 1-208-344-8617

We also have worked out some arrangements for free camping, if that is your preferred mode of lodging. You can contact Elaine Walker (email: [bat\\_hareem1@hotmail.com](mailto:bat_hareem1@hotmail.com), cell phone: 1-208-761-3957, or home phone 1-208-336-3983), if you want to check out the camping options.

There is no reason to delay. Come join us in Boise.

Stephen Love  
2013 Meeting Coordinator  
[slove@uidaho.edu](mailto:slove@uidaho.edu)  
1-208-397-4181

# HYBRID PENSTEMONS TO CHERISH

Ginny Maffitt, Sherwood, Oregon

The real advantage to growing hybrid penstemons is their ability to keep on blooming into the hot summer months and often into the autumn. I was quite amazed at this last fall, when I had two large-flowered red hybrids still blooming and beautiful. They both were blooming until the first frost in the last week of December! One of them was **P. x 'Ruby Candle'** (google its name for photos) I had purchased at Home Depot in September. I put it in on a sunny slope beside the driveway and poured a whole bucket of "quarter-ten" gravel in with the top soil. I top dress all penstemons with that same size gravel. That was fortunate as November



*P. x 'Firebird' red hybrid photo Maffitt*

and December delivered 25 inches of rain to the north Willamette Valley. The plant would have melted away if planted in my clay-loam soil. I hope this bodes well for its future here.

Another one still blooming until the late frost was **P. x 'Firebird'**, another huge red. It's been in a large pot, competing with a *Fremontodendron californicum* (California flannelbush) for the last three years. It's likely very

close to 'Ruby Candle' in heritage and runs to about 30 inches tall and multi-stemmed. It has narrow leaves, about one-half inch wide with fascicles (tiny leaf clusters between leaf and stem), which suggests parentage in **Section Fasciculus**, such as **P. campanulatus**.

I continue to purchase various hybrids as they ap-



*P. x 'Bev Jensen', photo G. Maffitt*

pear in the nurseries hoping for winter-hardiness. In coastal western U.S., this means non-dormancy, so roots must tolerate wet, not snowy winters. This huge valley is about 60 air miles from the tempering Pacific coast. Sudden, infrequent cold snaps can go down to about 18 degrees F here. Since many of the large-flowered hybrids have a good shot of **P. cobaea**, its genes often are a literal 'kiss of death' in this climate. The huge-flowered **P. x 'Bev Jensen'** succumbed one cold winter. However, Louise Parsons, about 80 miles south of me in Corvallis, in the central Willamette Valley, seems to have great luck with **cobaea** parentage hybrids.

Typically our frosts begin in late October, so the delay until late December became a strange, balmy autumn. The last time it happened was in 2008. Temperatures had been fairly mild until one night suddenly plunging to 19 degrees in the first week of December. With no time to harden up, many plants were lost or suffered grievous damage. My hybrid pents mostly went to "penstemon-heaven" that year!

Winter of 2012 was gentler with gradually decreasing night-time temperatures. Still, the winter-blooming viburnums, sansanqua camellias, heathers and one cream-yellow mini-rhododendren were in fairly robust bloom. It was almost a relief when we finally got a 30 degree night by late December. At that point, the red hybrid penstemon flowers looked somewhat freeze-dried, but the foliage still was nice.



*P. campanulatus, blurry, but see fascicles, photo G. Maffitt.*



*P x 'Blue Midnight', photo by Joy Creek Nursery*

A few other hybrids have done spectacularly here for a number of years. **P. x 'Blue Midnight'** has bloomed for several years on a steep, deeply graveled bank. It came from nearby Joy Creek Nursery in Scapoose, OR, which develops lots of hybrids and does a roaring mail-order business. A gorgeous violet from their 'Kissed' series is **P. x 'Pur-**



*P x 'Purple Kissed, photo by Joy Creek Nursery*

**ple Kissed'**. Visit their website and click the penstemon 'hot button' for lots of cultural information and see other hybrids and species. One point they make is



*P x 'Big Purple Bells', photo by Louise Parsons*

that. plants with narrower foliage seem to survive better. Likely this is due to the genetics of **P. campanulatus** and others in **Section Fasciculus** that come from mountains in Mexico and New Mexico, experiencing mostly rainy winters. The true **fasciculus** species such as **P. kunthii**, **gentianoides** and **pinifolius** live for years in my beds and troughs.

Louise Parsons, a member from temperate Corvallis, Oregon, raised a lovely hybrid from an English hybridizer, which she called **P. x 'Big Purple Bells'**. It blooms vigorously through the summer. It resembles and predates **P. x 'Purple Kissed'** with a large white throat, but its flowers aren't as large. These plants have been long-lived in her garden in a former tree container.

A long-lived favorite from Joy Creek is **P. x 'Cherry Glow'**. My plant got to be a monstrous



*P x 'Cherry Glow' photo by G. Maffitt*

3 feet high and 4 feet across! It broke all the previous rules by thriving in a barely raised bed with some pumice amendment and chunks of concrete. It was next to the lawn, so got about 5 minutes of 'rain' every morning. It got so big, it was hard to walk by so I moved it elsewhere, but sadly it didn't recover. It's on my list to replace soon.

Another subgenus is very generous about hybridizing all by itself. This is the notoriously promiscuous **Subgenus Dasanthera**, also known in Europe as Northwest Shrubbies. Two years ago, I 'found' one thriving in my yard that may have three species in its make-up, so I'll include it here. I named it **P. x 'Cotton Candy'** as that is its delicate color. My guess is the large pink flowers are a product of **P. barrettiae**, **cardwellii** and **rupicola**. It has so many differing characteristics that I actually did a little spread sheet with leaf, corolla and calyx sizes to see which ones fit. This still didn't point



*P. x Cotton Candy*, photo by G. Maffitt

to any definite parents. It gives a good amount of seed that can be found in the APS Seed Exchange. It produces a sub-shrub with 1-2 inch, evergreen leaves forming a mound about 8 inches tall that sprawls to about 12-15 inches across fairly quickly. Louise reports a blooming seedling in that soft pink. I have 2 seedlings blooming in May, with the same large pink flowers resembling the parent, which breaks the rules for less than accurate results from possibly tetraploid hybrid seedlings.

Living on the West Coast, with three of our seasons typically cool and damp, even the tough hybrids can suffer. The best care is remove seed heads to allow further blooming in the summer. Leave heads on in the fall to help them gain dormancy. In the spring, cut them back to about 8 inches tall. Plant them on slopes (even if you create them

with a bucket of gravel) and water regularly in summer. Don't fertilize hybrid penstemons as it creates soft growth that flops and attracts disease and insects.

I'm saving primary hybrids and cultivars for another discussion. Primary hybrids are crosses of two separate species which often gives them hybrid vigor and longer bloom. Steve Law, a nurseryman and APS member from the UK, sent in that great article last year on work he is doing with new primary hybrids. I'll compare them to cultivars that are examples of extra special species, possible tetraploids.

The most comprehensive book I have seen covering hybrids was written by two Englishmen smitten with penstemons, David Way and Peter James, sadly now both deceased. *The Gardener's Guide to Growing Penstemons* was published in 1998 by our local Timber Press in Portland. Louise reports that Peter spoke at an APS annual meeting in Utah in the early 90's on the subject of large hybrids, referring to them as the "vulgar penstemons"—hilarious! Their book covers the species in a rather general way with good photos. It then gets down to listing nearly every hybrid up to that publishing date. It tells the stories of early breeders and modern crosses with lots of their history and best cultivation practices. I find it on Amazon still for sale, although strangely, the paperback editions are more expensive than the hardcovers! The Appendices in back are a wealth of information. With a huge number of colored photos, your penstemon reading fix is assured.

## APS Life and New Members

### May 2013 APS Life Members

Ryan Contreras, Corvallis, OR  
Pat and Noel Holmgren, Logan, UT

### May 2013 New Members

Christine Baer, Belmont, MT  
Paul Blischak, Akron, OH  
Wendy Covert, Lakewood, CO  
Dottie Fennell, Crumpler, NC  
Mary Jenson, Boulder, CO  
Ronda Koski, Wellington, CO  
Heidi Kratsch, Reno, NV  
Jennie Lawrence, Laramie, WY

Linda Meyer, Denver, CO  
Reid Miller, Viola, ID  
John Muzatco, Pinole, CA  
Dr. Patricia Neyman, Gardnerville, NV  
Megan Oldfeather, San Anselmo, CA  
Leigh Robertson, Ridgway, CO  
Majvor Tharander, Sweden  
Peggy Wait, Littleton, CO

## APS Officers

Update 2013

<b>Officer</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>email address</b>
President.....	Randy Tatroe.....	rtatroe@q.com
Vice President .....	Noel and Patricia Holmgren .....	nholmgren@nybg.org
Treasurer .....	Mary Cunningham .....	aps.treasurer@yahoo.com
Finance Auditor.....	Ed Godleski.....	e.godleski@csuohio.edu
Membership Secretaries.....	Phoebe McFarlane and Dale Lindgren .....	aps.membership@yahoo.com
Past President.....	Val Myrick.....	vkmyrick@pacbell.net
Robins Coordinator.....	Libby Wheeler.....	glwheel@prodigy.net
Board Member .....	Gerald Klingaman.....	gklinga@uark.edu
Board Member .....	Lupita Wesseler.....	wesseler@bendbroadband.com
Board Member .....	Andi Wolfe .....	wolfe.205@osu.edu
Special Projects.....	Dorothy Tuthill .....	dtuthill@uwyo.edu
Seed Exchange Director.....	Louise Parsons .....	parsont@peak.org
Registrar of Cultivars and Hybrids .....	Dr. Dale Lindgren .....	dlindgren1@unl.edu
Nominating Committee.....	Mary Mastin .....	mkmastin@prodigy.net
Librarian and Custodian of Slides Collection.....	Dr. Stephen Love.....	slove@uidaho.edu
Bulletin Editor.....	Dr. Stephen Love.....	slove@uidaho.edu
Website Administrator.....	Hugh Mac Millan .....	humanator@yahoo.com
Historian.....	Dr. Dale Lindgren .....	dlindgren1@uni.edu
Newsletter Editor .....	Ginny Maffitt.....	maffitt6540@comcast.net

## Seed Collecting Time is Around the Corner

APS 2013-14 Seed Exchange by Louise Parsons

The highlight of our 2011-12 seed exchange was the number of new members participating. Every year there is a new element of diversity in donated APS seed. For example, Ina Lengyel contributed species collected in Riverside County, California, an area that had been scarcely represented in the past. Many California species are good germinators that do not require cold-conditioning. Yellow-flowering *Keckiella antirroides*, *P. clevelandii*, var *connatus*, and *P. heterophyllus* have all germinated profusely for me.

Over morning coffee recently I looked out a south window towards a bed of pumice scree to spot a splash of the brightest “ten-mile” pink imaginable. In my excitement I raced out to find a seedling from John Weiser’s *P. newberryi*.

As penstemons bloom in the garden, we are reminded that it is time to plan for seed collecting. Most wild pents will bloom later than those in the garden, extending our opportunities and enjoyment. Depending upon locale, the season for seed-collecting runs from about mid-July until early autumn.

Donors are the “hub and quintessence” of the

exchange. We ought to do all that we can to show our appreciation. Although the donation deadline is December 1, 2013, earlier contributions are appreciated. Yearly seed exchange distribution is closed at the end of March. However donations can be accepted at any time. I have a current USDA permit to import “small lots of seed”. Overseas members, who are encouraged to contribute seed, will need to obtain documents, special labels, and instructions from me well in advance of sending seed. Donations may consist of penstemon or closely-related species or hybrids from garden, and/or wild sources. Related *Scrophulariaceae-type* species such as *nothochelone*, *keckiella*, and *castilleja* are very welcome. As always, please notify me at any time of your special needs or desires so that we can encourage members who might be familiar with a locale for collection and sharing. If you have any questions, ideas, or concerns, don’t hesitate to write: Louise Parsons <parsonATpeak.org> 1915 SE Stone St., Corvallis, OR 97333-1832. I am always happy to help.

To aid in planning, here is a tentative list of species and forms that are requested. Also included are those that we are either out-of or very low-on. This list is a work in progress and is not intended to be limiting.

alamosensis	grinnellii	rattanii
aridus	hallii (older avail.)	rupicola (always in demand)
attenuatus, yellow	harbouri	saxosorum
auriberbis	hartwegii	strictiformis
azureus	harvardii	subserratus
barbatus hyb. ex ‘Petit Bouquet’	heterodoxus (specific member request)	teucrioides (especially sought after)
barbatus wild-collected	incertus	thurberi
barbatus x ‘Merlot’ (wine color)	janishiae	tubaeflorus
bicolor	kunthii unk. red hyb.	tusharensis
californicus (always in demand)	labrosus	versicolor
caryi (wild requested)	laricifolius	virgatus white
caespitosus	lemhiensis	P. hybrid ‘Prairie Dusk’
cinicola pink	moriahensis	P. hyb. ‘Crystal’ (mine sets few seed)
cyathophorus	nanus	<i>Keckiella cordifolia</i> ,
dolius	pallidus	<i>corymbosa</i> , <i>ternata</i>
elegantulus	parryi	
ellipticus (wild requested)	parvulus	
eriantherus (popular and very low	paysionorum	
eximeus	pinifolius ‘Mango’	
fasciculatus	pinifolius ‘Magdalena Sunshine’	
fendleri	pratensis (cream)	
flavescens (members request wild)	pruinus dwarf form	
franklinii	pumilis	
gairdneri	purpusii (specific member request)	
gibbensii		

## Membership Renewal

The American Penstemon Society involves almost 300 penstemon aficionados world-wide, many of whom will enjoy meeting other APS members and traveling to Boise, Idaho for our annual meeting on June 21 -24, 2013. Dues include our newsletter (with a notice sent to our members electronically and posted on our website), annual bulletin and the annual seed exchange. Dues run on a calendar basis, renewed at the first of each year.

US and Canadian dues \$15 US; Elsewhere \$20 US. Dues for students are \$5. Life Membership is \$150. In addition, members may pay two years in advance and receive the third year free. Please do not send cash.

You may pay either by check or by PayPal on our website at [www.apsdev.org](http://www.apsdev.org). Make checks payable to American Penstemon Society. Mail to:

Dale Lindgren/Phoebe McFarlane  
Membership Secretaries  
9202 Maloney Drive  
North Platte, NE 69101

If you wish to contact Dale Lindgren and/or Phoebe McFarlane, email [aps.membership@yahoo.com](mailto:aps.membership@yahoo.com). Please update any current info with new phone numbers or e-mail addresses.

Thanks for your enthusiastic support of the Society

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

We do not sell, share or distribute member data in any manner.

Remember, if you plan to attend the exciting meetings in Idaho, your membership needs to be up to date. Also, if you have changed your e-mail address lately, please send this information to the Membership Chairmen at [aps.membership@yahoo.com](mailto:aps.membership@yahoo.com). Thank you.