

"Selected" Penstemon Releases from Aberdeen Plant Materials Center  
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The Aberdeen Plant Materials Center in cooperation with the Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station announce the release of two selected ecotypes of Penstemon; Alpine penstemon (*Penstemon venustus*), accession number 9008487 and Firecracker penstemon (*Penstemon eatonii*), accession number 9008469.

Except for one minor species, the genus *Penstemon* does not occur naturally outside of North America. There are approximately 150 species and most are found in the western United States. Penstemons are perennial plants with opposite leaves, and usually showy, often two-lipped flowers.

As a selected release, these plants will not be given a name, but will be referred as "the Clearwater selection" of Alpine penstemon and "the Richfield selection" of Firecracker penstemon. These references document the original collection sites.

"The Clearwater selection" of Alpine penstemon was collected near the Dworshak reservoir on the Clearwater River in northern Idaho. Its natural habitat is at elevations of 1,000 to 6,000 feet (305 to 1829 meters) and a precipitation zone from 20 to 35+ inches (508 to 889+ millimeters). Alpine penstemon can survive in full sunlight and on open rocky slopes, but does not do well in areas with poor drainage. It is a perennial, cool-season forb, 12 to 24 inches (30 to 60 centimeters) tall with a strong taproot and a woody base. The leaves are oblong and sharply serrate. The flowers are bright lavender to purple-violet and appear in one or more narrow terminal panicles 12 to 20 inches (30 to 51 centimeters) long.

"The Richfield selection" of Firecracker penstemon was collected near Richfield, Utah which is in the south central portion of the state. Its natural habitat is the sagebrush, juniper, and ponderosa pine zones at 3,000 to 8,000 feet (914 to 2438 meters) elevation and a precipitation zone from 10 to 16 inches (254 to 406 millimeters). It also can survive full sunlight, but may not tolerate hot, dry areas and is not adapted to areas with poor drainage. Firecracker penstemon is a perennial cool-season forb with a fibrous root system and the stems are often decumbent or reclining. The leaves are large and slightly pubescent. The flowers are bright red in racemes on 24 to 36 inch (60 to 91 centimeters) tall, upright stems.

These two penstemons were selected from a collection of 119 penstemons assembled and evaluated at the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center from 1981 to 1985. They were selected for their natural beauty, hardiness, seed production, and minimal seed stratification needs. The potential uses of these penstemons are soil stabilization on somewhat droughty sites, plant diversity, and beautification of many different sites.

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