

# NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

## *Lindheimer Chapter*

### PLANT OF THE MONTH MARCH, 2013

#### HILL COUNTRY PENSTEMON, *PENSTEMON TRIFLORUS*



USDA Range Map: Texas

#### Hill Country Penstemon

Hill Country Penstemon is a wonderful spring blooming perennial. In April and May it sends up 1' to 2' tall spikes of red to pink flowers that are among the showiest of all the Penstemon species. It is endemic to the Edwards Plateau and in its native habitat is found in open areas on the limestone hills of the area. As might be expected from its natural habitat, it prefers sun and well drained sites. The flowers provide nectar to hummingbirds and butterflies.

When not in bloom, the plant makes a pretty rosette of shiny, dark green leaves. The flower stalks can be cut after blooming, or left standing to let the plant reseed. Over time, this will produce a nice stand of this plant. It cross breeds readily with other Penstemons, especially the white *Penstemon cobaea* (Wild Foxglove) also found in our area. By planting a mix of these and other Penstemons suitable for similar conditions, and letting the plants go to seed, there will eventually be an interesting mix of colors from red to pink to white, many with interesting veining on the flowers.

While this plant may be somewhat difficult to find in nurseries, it is well worth the search. Alternatively, collect seeds from a plant found in the wild (however, be certain collecting is not prohibited, as in State Parks). Penstemons have little resistance to deer browsing, and must be planted in protected locations or given some type of enclosure or other type of protection

Note - There are many species of Penstemon, some of which thrive under different conditions. For moist areas or heavier soil consider the Brazos Penstemon (*Penstemon tenuis*).

Text and Photo by John Siemssen