

June 2016 Plant of the Month



Penstemon hirsutus (L) Willd, Hairy Beardtongue

Plant of the Month for June is a native perennial herb found infrequently throughout the State. *Penstemon hirsutus* is an upland figwort (Scrophulariaceae) found in hardwood forests and road edges where mowing is infrequent. The genus is widespread North America, with more than 300 species, many found in the Inner Mountain West. Mary Hough (1983) describes Hairy Beardtongue as frequent and occasionally becoming weedy. Mary found records for the plant in our Northern Provinces as well as in Inner Coastal Plain counties, excluding the central Pine Barrens.

Hairy beardtongue differs from its four siblings by having a hirsute, gland-tipped hairs, a flattened corolla throat and dull violet-purple corolla with white lobes. The similar looking pale beardtongue (*P. pallida*) differs by a soft pilose leaf on both surfaces without gland tips.

Native Americans throughout the continent used members of the genus *Penstemon* for a variety of ailments Tribes with populations within the Hairy Beardtongue range used members of the *Penstemon* for coughs and gastrointestinal aids.

Hairy beardtongue is in full flower in the southern counties, and it should be visible any day at its northern reaches. Search dry open woodlands and roadsides during the month of June for this beautiful wildflower.

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