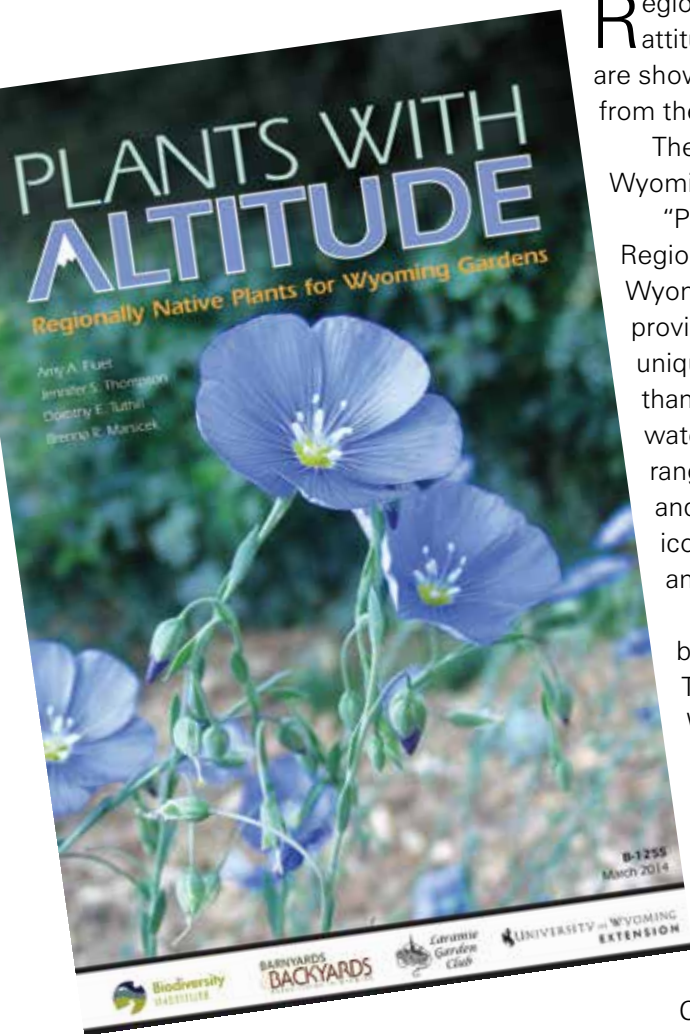


NEW BOOKLET HIGHLIGHTS GARDEN, LANDSCAPE PLANTS NATIVE TO REGION



Regionally native plants that mix attitude and altitude with beauty are showcased in a new publication from the University of Wyoming.

These plants will weather Wyoming's worst.

"Plants with Altitude: Regionally Native Plants for Wyoming Gardens," B-1255, provides physical descriptions and unique characteristics of more than 50 perennials in addition to water need, sun exposure, native ranges, plant family, and height and width. When applicable, icons denote animal resistance and pollinator attraction.

"The plants were chosen by the authors," says Jennifer Thompson of University of Wyoming Extension and one of the writers. "They are regionally native plants that are attractive, relatively easy to get hold of, and that have performed well in our gardens, which are in challenging environments."

Collaborators are the UW Biodiversity Institute, the Laramie Garden Club, Barnyards & Backyards Rural Living in Wyoming, and UW Extension.

Thompson had bounced around the idea of a regionally native booklet for some time. She had grown regionally native plants in her gardens and landscapes – especially those



that required few inputs, including water.

"Many western native plants make super plants for gardens," notes Thompson. "These plants are fun to grow and rather fascinating to watch."

They support a number of pollinators, and Thompson says she abandoned her hummingbird feeder after several years of growing many of the plants in the booklet.

"Hummingbirds ignored it and spent their time visiting and fighting over the penstemons and other flowers," she notes.

Thompson found others interested in such plants, were willing to write descriptions, and whose organizations were able to contribute financially or with people power.

Those include Dorothy Tuthill, botanist and associate director, and Brenna Marsicek, project coordinator, both of the UW Biodiversity Institute, and Amy Fluet of the Laramie Garden Club.

Many of the plants are now in the horticultural trade and are at quality local and regional nurseries or online, says Thompson.

"Others are not particularly hard to start from seed, and we have provided some key instructions in the guide on how to do so," she says.

A limited supply of booklets is available across the state at local UW Extension, conservation district, and weed and pest control district offices.

Hard copies can be purchased for \$5 plus \$3 shipping and handling by going to www.uwyo.edu/ces and clicking Publications on the left-hand side, entering B-1255, and following the prompts.

For even more information on Wyoming gardening subjects (including flowers, trees, shrubs, soils, insects, weeds, composting, and more) visit www.barnyardsandbackyards.com. This site includes a link to the Plants with Altitude: Regionally Native Plants for Wyoming Gardens website at <http://wyomingnativegardens.org/>.

An entry in "Plants with Altitude"



Penstemon strictus - Photo: Jennifer S. Thompson

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BEARDTONGUE

Penstemon strictus Bentham

Height: 18-30"

Width: 12-36"

Of the purple/blue penstemons, Rocky Mountain beardtongue is the species most commonly found at nurseries. With tall spikes of blue-purple flowers and shiny dark-green leaves, it is attractive in any garden and very attractive to pollinators, too. Like most penstemons, it has a short blooming season—typically the month of June. Also like most, it prefers dry soils. With excess water, it will develop mildew on the leaves, and the root crowns may rot, especially if it goes into winter with wet feet. Rocky Mountain beardtongue can reseed aggressively, but cutting off the flower spikes after the blooms fade is an easy way to control this tendency.

Other nice blue-to-purple penstemons to consider are Grand Mesa penstemon (*P. mensarum* Pennell), with tall spikes of deep-blue flowers; Wasatch penstemon (*P. cyananthus* Hook.), with bright-blue flowers; and *P. virens* Pennell ex Rydb., sometimes called blue mist beardtongue. This last one is smaller, only a foot or so tall, and can vary in color from purple to blue. It is also happy with light shade, unlike most other penstemons from our region. An even shorter penstemon is mat penstemon (*P. caespitosus* Nutt. ex Gray). It forms a great groundcover in some rather windblown locations and is covered with purple-blue flowers in the late spring.

Several species have flowers of glorious, to-die-for turquoise and sky-blue, including *P. angustifolius* Nutt. ex Pursh (narrow-leaf) and *P. nitidus* Douglas ex Benth. These two native penstemons are much more challenging to grow—they're just not happy except in quite dry, neglected garden beds. In a garden setting, these are often very short-lived. Fortu-



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