Shrubby Penstemon & Lovely Penstemon (*Penstemon fruticosus, P. venustus*)  
Figwort Family

**Why Choose Them?**

Colorful and handsome, Penstemons are easy to grow. They can soften and enliven the dry rocky sites they favor, and these two species are fine ones to start with. Shrubby Penstemon is woody and low-growing, with a neat form and dark green leaves that stay on all winter. Its tube-shaped flowers are a rosy-purple to lavender on spikes six inches long. Lovely Penstemon is a taller herbaceous perennial with thick flowering spikes of light purple to dark blue flowers that contain a white interior.

**In the Garden**

In a bed or border or rock garden, these Penstemons will create a color spot from May to June. Happiest in sun, they tolerate—even prefer—dry conditions and gravelly soil. Fast growers, they provide nectar for butterflies, hummingbirds, and especially bumblebees.

**The Facts**

Plant them in the fall in a well-drained, sunny site, water them to give them a good start, and these Penstemons will bloom handsomely next year. While Penstemons in the garden may live fast and die young—often after 3-4 years—they are easy to propagate from seeds or cuttings. Shrubby Penstemon will usually grow 6 to 18 inches tall, while Lovely Penstemon may reach 3 feet.

**Where to See Them**

Shrubby Penstemon is widespread from east of the Cascades to the Rockies, from mid-elevations to the subalpine zone. Look for it on rocks and cliffs among Ponderosa pine and in the sagebrush. Lovely Penstemon is most common in southeastern Washington, on open hillsides in sagebrush and bunchgrass country.
And, hey, what does Penstemon mean?

Penstemon means “five stamens.” The stamens are the male parts in a flower that produce pollen. However, if you investigate inside the tube of a Penstemon flower, you’ll see that while there are indeed five stamens cozied up top, one of them is sterile.

You can find out more information about native plants, including where to buy them, from the Washington Native Plant Society.

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