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A Conservation Plant Released by The Natural Resources Conservation Service
Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, Los Lunas, New Mexico

'Bandera'

Rocky Mountain penstemon

Penstemon strictus Benth

'Bandera' Rocky Mountain penstemon flowers.

'Bandera' Rocky Mountain penstemon was released in 1973 by New Mexico State University Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center, Colorado State University, New Mexico Department of Transportation, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

Description
Bandera Rocky Mountain penstemon has an abundance of shiny, dark green leaves. The lower leaves form a basal rosette. Some of the basal leaves turn reddish-purple in winter, while the remainder of the leaves remain green throughout the year. Under cultivation, the basal leaves may be as long as 6 inches and as wide as 1 inch. The upper leaves may be as long as 4 inches and as wide as ¾ inch. The basal diameters of mature, individual plants average 20 inches, but they may be as large as 30 inches, with optimum amounts of water and soil nutrients. The stout stems are spreading to upright and grow from 8 to 23 inches in height. The flowering stalk is elongated and erect. Removal of this stalk after flowering will ensure flowers the following year. Abundant and showy flowers range from blue to violet.

Source
Bandera seeds were first collected in the ponderosa pine zone northwest of Mountainair, New Mexico. The approximate elevation and average annual precipitation at the location are 7,400 feet and 16 to 18 inches per year, respectively. In addition to ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), associated species include Arizona fescue (*Festuca arizonica*), mountain muhly (*Muhlenbergia montana*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*). The variety was initially tested at the USDA- NRCS Los Lunas Plant Materials Center as NM-628.

Conservation Uses
Bandera Rocky Mountain penstemon is an herbaceous, perennial plant that is useful for beautification, soil stabilization, and helps diversify wildlife diets. The beautiful flowers and evergreen basal rosette make this plant attractive for ornamental planting. Penstemons, in general, make excellent ground cover and soil stabilization plants because of their fibrous root system and their spreading, layering type of growth.

Area of Adaptation and Use
The natural range of Rocky Mountain penstemon is central and northern New Mexico, Colorado, southern Wyoming, Utah, and northeastern Arizona. It is found on rocky to sandy loam soils at elevations of 6,000 to 11,000 feet. Under cultivation, as in gardens or lawns, it can be grown at lower elevations.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings
Bandera Rocky Mountain penstemon is easily established from seed, and seedling vigor is generally good. Plant the seed at a depth of ¼ to ½ inch during the fall or early winter. The soil must be kept moist after planting for natural stratification (moist, cold treatment) to occur. Bandera can also be established from sprigs obtained by dividing the base of older plants. Sprigs need some roots and a few leaves for best results. Basal portions of the stems can layer, or root, readily in moist soil.

Ecological Considerations
Few disease or insect problems have been noted. However, fusarium wilt has been observed on Bandera growing on irrigated sandy loam, but not on clay or clay loam soil. Occasionally scale insects attack plants that have low vigor.

Seed and Plant Production
For seed production, drilling 3 to 5 pounds per acre of pure live seed at 0.25 to 0.5 inch deep in early spring is recommended for establishing full stands. Planting in late fall or early winter is preferred for a natural cold stratification of dormant seeds. Bandera may be seeded anytime from early spring to late summer with supplemental irrigation. A 30 to 40 inches row spacing may be used for ease of cultivation. Nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizer should be applied as determined by a soil test. Generally, 40 pounds per acre of nitrogen and 80 pounds per acre of P_2O_5 may be applied. Seed can be harvested by a flail vac seed harvester and cleaned using a fanning mill. Under good growing conditions, seed production average 150 pounds per acre pure live seed.

Availability
For conservation use: For information on seed sources or on the management and use of Bandera Rocky Mountain penstemon, contact your local County Extension Service or the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For seed or plant increase: For information on seed sources of Bandera Rocky Mountain penstemon, contact Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

For More Information
For more information on Bandera Rocky Mountain penstemon, please contact Los Lunas Plant Materials Center 1036 Miller Road, Los Lunas, NM 87031, Tele: 505-865-7340, FAX: 505-865-5163
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plant-materials/nmpmc

Citation
Release Brochure for Bandera Rocky Mountain penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*).2023. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, Los Lunas, NM 87031.

For additional information, contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/, and visit the PLANTS Web site http://plants.usda.gov or the Plant Materials Program Website. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plant-materials

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