

Plants for Solving Resource Problems

CLEARWATER SELECTION VENUS PENSTEMON

Species: *Penstemon venustus*
 Common Name: Venus Penstemon
 Plant Symbol: PEVE2
 Accession Number: 9008487

Source: Seed was collected near Dworshak Reservoir on the Clearwater River, Idaho. No detailed site information is available. The area ranges from 1,600 to 2,800 feet elevation. The soils are mostly granite in origin and annual precipitation ranges from 23 to 38 inches.

Native Site Information: This plant is native to the western United States and is adapted to rangeland areas of 1,000 to 6,000 feet elevation in 20 to 35 inch rainfall areas.

Method of Selection: Selected from a collection of 119 penstemon accessions assembled and evaluated at the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center from 1981 to 1985. There were 3 Venus penstemon accessions in the assembly. The Clearwater Selection was selected for its beauty, hardiness, seed production and natural range of adaptability. Seed from this accession does not appear to need a long stratification period to germinate and the plants are long lived.

Description: *Penstemon venustus* is a perennial, cool season forb. It is 12 to 24 inches tall with a strong taproot and woody base. The leaves are oblong and sharply serrate. The flowers appear in one or more narrow terminal panicles, 12 to 20 inches long. The flowers are bright lavender to purple blooming in mid-summer through early fall.



Venus Penstemon

Use: The potential uses of the Clearwater Selection of Venus penstemon are erosion control, diversity and beautification. The heavy taproot and woody base make it an excellent plant for soil stabilization. The heavy basal leaf mass and showy purple flowers also make it a desirable forb for beautification.

Insect and Disease Problems: Venus penstemon is susceptible to soil-borne fusarium and rhizoctonia root rot, which can be severe in poorly drained loam and clay textured soils. There are no known insect problems.

Environmental Considerations: This selected release is from a species native to the Intermountain West and has no known negative impacts on wild or domestic animals. Venus penstemon is not considered a weedy or invasive species but can spread to adjoining vegetative communities under ideal environmental conditions. It co-exists with other native species and adds biodiversity to those plant communities.

Potential Area of Adaptation: The natural habitat of Venus penstemon is at elevations from 1,000 to 6,000 feet in 20 to 35 inch rainfall areas. Venus penstemon can survive in full sunlight and on open rocky slopes. It does not do well in areas with poor drainage.

Potential Soil Adaptation: Shallow rocky, loams, sandy loams, gravelly loams, well-drained to moderately well-drained soils.

Planting and Harvesting: Venus penstemon may be seeded with a drill or broadcast planted and then covered to a depth of 1/8 to 1/4 inches into a firm seedbed in late fall. The full seeding rate is 2 pounds Pure Live Seed (PLS) per acre. When used as a component of a seed mix, adjust to the percent of mix desired. For seed production, Venus penstemon should be seeded in 36 inch rows at a rate of 0.7 pounds PLS per acre. The use of weed barrier fabric is an alternative to allow closer spacing and facilitate weed control. Venus penstemon should be seeded in late fall or early winter to allow the seed to stratify. Germination can occur over several growing seasons.

Seed is harvested by hand stripping or combine. Flowering is indeterminate with mature capsules and flowers present at harvest period. Seed is mature when capsules are dry and seed is hard. Multiple harvest periods by hand may be necessary to maximize seed collection. Some seed will shatter as capsules dry and open. Seed can be separated from the capsule with a hammermill or barley debearder followed by air-screening. Seed should be stored in a cool, dry area to maintain viability. Seed

yields range from 100 to 200 pounds per acre.

Seed Maintenance: G0 and G1 seed is maintained at:

USDA-NRCS, Aberdeen PMC
P.O. Box 296
1691A S. 2700 W.
Aberdeen, ID 83210
Phone: (208) 397-4133

G1 seed is available through the University of Idaho Foundation Seed Program, Utah Crop Improvement Association and Soil Conservation Districts in Idaho, Utah and Nevada. Growers may produce one generation each of G2 and G3 seed.

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