

PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Phoenix, AZ  
Permit No. 5343

P.O. Box 2500 • Litchfield Park, AZ 85340  
Located at 10020 W. Glendale Ave. • Glendale, AZ 85307  
toll free 800-840-8509 • phone 623-247-8509  
fax 623-247-6354 • email [sales@mswn.com](mailto:sales@mswn.com) • [www.mswn.com](http://www.mswn.com)

## SPRING HOURS

7:00 am to 4:30 pm Office  
7:00 am to 3:30 pm Yard/Will Call  
Open Monday through Friday  
Closed Weekends and Major Holidays

## UPCOMING EVENTS / NOTICES

**March 9 – 10**  
**Two Day Tree**  
**Appraisal Workshop**  
Sponsored by the Western Chapter  
ISA at the Clarion San Francisco  
Airport, Millbrae, CA. Info: Contact  
the WC-ISA at 714-639-3610 or  
visit [www.wcisa.net](http://www.wcisa.net)

**March 9 – 11**  
**Xeriscape New Mexico**  
**Conference and Expo**  
Sponsored by the NM Xeriscape  
Council at the Albuquerque  
Convention Center, Albuquerque, NM.  
Info: Contact Scott Varner at  
505-468-1021 or visit  
[www.xeriscapenm.com](http://www.xeriscapenm.com)

**March 11 -12**  
**Spring Plant Sale**  
Tohono Chul Park, Tucson, AZ.  
Info: Call 520-742-6455 or visit  
[www.tohonochulpark.org](http://www.tohonochulpark.org)

**March 18**  
**First Annual California**  
**Friendly Plant Sale** at  
the Water Conservation Garden,  
Cuyamaca College, El Cajon, CA.  
Info: Call 619-660-1684 or visit  
[www.thegarden.org](http://www.thegarden.org)

**March 18**  
**Spring Plant Sale** at the  
Tucson Botanical Garden, Tucson, AZ.  
Info: Call 520-326-9686 or visit  
[www.tucsonbotanical.org](http://www.tucsonbotanical.org)

**March 18 – 19**  
**Spring Plant Sale** at the  
Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix, AZ  
Info: Call 480-941-1225 or visit  
[www.dbg.org](http://www.dbg.org).

**March 31- April 1**  
**Sun Country Landscape**  
**Conference** – “Redefining  
Xeriscape – Bringing Back the  
Green” - Marriott at the El Paso  
International Airport, El Paso, TX  
Info: Contact Oscar Mestas at  
915-834-5610 or visit [www.wtufo.org](http://www.wtufo.org).

**April 8**  
**Spring Plant Sale** at the  
Fort Worth Botanical Garden, Fort  
Worth, TX Info: Call 817-871-7686  
or visit [www.fwbgb.com](http://www.fwbgb.com)  
**April 8 – 9**  
**Annual Native Plant Sale**  
at the Heard Natural Science  
Museum, McKinney, TX Info: Call  
972-562-5566 or visit  
[www.heardmuseum.org](http://www.heardmuseum.org)

**April 10 -12**  
**Western Chapter ISA**  
**73rd Annual Meeting and**  
**Trade Show**  
Fairmont Miramar Hotel, Santa  
Monica, CA Info: Contact the  
WC-ISA at 714-639-3610 or visit  
[www.wcisa.net](http://www.wcisa.net)

**April 28**  
**Chihuahuan Desert**  
**Gardens FloraFest**  
**Lecture** followed by the  
**Annual Plant Sale**  
**April 29 - 30**  
University of Texas – El Paso  
Centennial Museum, El Paso, TX  
Info: Call 915-747-5665 or visit  
<http://museum.utep.edu/default.htm>

## GREAT PERENNIALS FOR SPRING

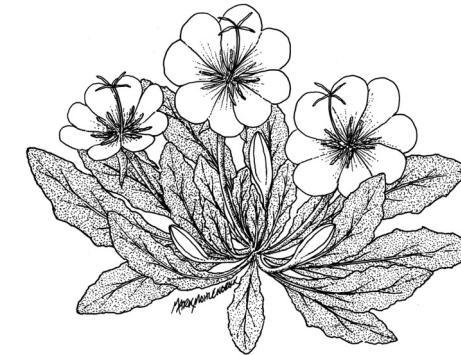
As we head into spring it seems as if every plant is bursting into bloom. Many flowering trees and shrubs are at their peak this time of the year. It is a joy to walk a desert path adorned with palo verdes or sweet acacia. The drone of hundreds of bees working among the colorful branches electrifies the air, not to mention the perfume of nature. Spring is a time of delight.

To provide additional color, landscape professionals may be tempted to use annual bedding plants. While they will add a short blast of color, desert adapted perennials may be a better way to go. Many are more water efficient than annuals and they will last for several seasons if properly maintained.

We thought we would review a few of these wonderful desert adapted plants for your consideration.

### SHADY CHARACTERS

Looking for perennials that can handle a bit of shade? One of the best for low light areas is the Golden Columbine, *Aquilegia chrysantha*. This lovely herbaceous plant produces masses of golden yellow flowers from late spring to fall. Native to stream banks and canyons of the Southwest, this perennial requires more water than many of our other selections but the



reward is great. *Stachys coccinea* or Texas Betony also prefers moderate to ample irrigation for best results. Coral red tubular flowers are produced from March to October on this plant with fuzzy, gray-green foliage. Both of these plants have flowers that attract hummingbirds to the garden.

Many of the Evening Primroses are also well suited for either sunny or shady areas, particularly *Oenothera speciosa* ‘Siskiyou Pink’ or Mexican Evening Primrose. This super tough plant has a bountiful bloom of delicate pink flowers each spring. Several of the penstemons will also perform well in shade, including the *P. pseudospectabilis*, Canyon Penstemon, and *P. parryi*, Parry Penstemon. The first species has rose colored flowers while the latter has clear pink blossoms.

While some perennials will thrive in shady locations, they prefer light during a portion of the day to

stimulate flowering activity. Perennials that do well with a bit of afternoon shade include *Gaura lindheimeri* ‘Siskiyou Pink’ and ‘Whirling Butterflies’. The first selection of *Gaura* has wonderful pink flowers while the Whirling Butterflies has clear white blossoms. Both produce long floral spikes from a basal rosette of foliage. The small orchid-like flowers adorn the plant primarily in spring and fall.

*Russelia equisetiformis*, also known as Coral Fountain, is a larger, more shrub-like perennial. This nearly leafless plant has dark green stems much like horsetail, but produces masses of coral red tubular flowers from early spring well into fall. It will thrive in full sun or part shade and makes for a large mat-like groundcover. It is notably salt tolerant and very attractive to hummingbirds.

### SUN LOVERS

There are a multitude of plants that prefer full sun conditions. The more common ones are often called “road-side weeds” because they are commonly found on disturbed soils throughout the Southwest. Yellow is the predominate color here, with many producing daisy-like flowers. Here is a quick review of the daisy types.

(continued)

Bahia, *Bahia absinthifolia*, is fast growing, spreads by underground rhizomes and reseeds readily. *Baileya multiradiata* or Desert Marigold has soft, silver gray foliage and produces long stalks that carry the flowers above the plant. It too reseeds readily. *Berlandiera lyrata*, also known as Chocolate Flower, has maroon-eyed blossoms with the distinct scent of chocolate. *Tetaneuris acaulis* (formerly *Hymenoxys*) has grass-like foliage and daisy-like flowers produced on long stalks. *Zinnia grandiflora*, Prairie Zinnia, has a bit of orange included with the yellow. All four will maintain a height of about one foot. The Paper Flower, *Psilostrophe tagetina*, will produce a slightly larger mound to 2 feet in diameter. Brittlebush, *Encelia farinosa*, is a bit taller, producing silver foliage on plants that can reach 4 feet in height provided they have ample water.

All of the previous species of sun lovers are members of the Composite or Sunflower Family. Numbering some 20,000 species, it is the largest family of flowering plants. It might seem that all of them are yellow, but there are more than a few exceptions. One of the best examples is *Melampodium leucanthum*, the Blackfoot Daisy. This mounding perennial will grow to a height of one foot by two feet and produces small white flowers with purple veins, and a yellow center. Floral activity can be anticipated from March through December.

There are other sun lovers outside of the Composite Family. Of notable mention is *Calylophus hartwegii* v. *fendleri*, more commonly called Sundrops. This relative of Mexican Evening Primrose has large, clear yellow, funnel-shaped flowers. Like the Primrose, the blossoms open at night and fade to an orange-pink by the next afternoon, lasting less than 24 hours. The flowering is primarily in spring and summer.

The Flat-Top Buckwheat is a little known but valuable plant for use in hot, sunny rock gardens. The small dark green leaves have white wooly undersides. Summer brings masses of small white to pink flowers in flattened clusters. Plants will grow to about 2 feet in height and width. The botanical name for this little beauty is *Eriogonum fasciculatum* v. *poliofolium*.

Orange is also a predominate color for desert flowers, and one of the most common along road sides is the globe mallow, *Sphaeralcea ambigua*. This relative of cotton is common throughout the Southwest, growing as large as 3 feet depending

on available water. Sometimes referred to as sore-eye poppy, the name is derived from the fact that some people are allergic to the hairs on the foliage and irritation can occur from handling the plant. While orange flowers are most common, the flower color can range from white to lavender, pink and red. Mountain States has selected and trademarked several selections of Globe Mallow including Louis Hamilton™ which has a deep watermelon red color, and Papago Pink™, which has extremely large pink blossoms.

Blue and lavender are highly prized colors in the desert, and Goodding Verbena is a welcome addition to the plant palette. This Arizona native produces gorgeous lavender flowers, predominately in the spring. The genus has been changed from *Verbena* to *Glandularia*. It is somewhat short lived, especially if offered excessive irrigation, but it reseeds readily. Goodding Verbena will form a low growing mat of gray-green leaves to about one foot in height by 2 feet across.

One of the most desirable perennials is the Penstemon. This highly diverse genus is found in every Southwestern state, with representatives in almost every climate type. Most penstemons produce a low-growing rosette of foliage which provides nutrition to sustain the plant. From the rosette one or more spikes rise above the foliage to



bear tubular flowers. The common name for the genus is beardtongue, in reference to the fact that one of the five stamens (male part of the flower) and the lower half of the corolla often have a hairy surface.

Penstemons are absolute magnets for hummingbirds, butterflies and bees. Be prepared to see lots of activity around flowering time as these bearded beauties

contain lots of nectar to sustain our winged friends. Let's look at a few of the more common penstemon species:

*Penstemon eatoni* is also known as the Firecracker Penstemon. This beardtongue has bright scarlet red tubular flowers borne on 2 foot tall stalks from March through June. The dark green leaves are 2 to 4 inches long, forming a ground hugging rosette. It is common through the Southwest.

Fendler's Penstemon, *P. fendleri*, is a Southwestern native with violet-blue flowers from April to August. The blossoms are produced on 1 to 2 foot tall spikes rising above gray-green leaves. This is another beardtongue that prefers sandy, well drained soils.

*Penstemon parryi*, or Parry's Penstemon, is one of the most commonly cultivated penstemon species. It is native to southern Arizona and the Mexican state of Sonora. The bright pink flowers are carried on 3 foot tall stems above a basal rosette of bluish-green leaves. It blooms from February to April. It thrives at lower elevations than most of the other species.

The Canyon Penstemon, *P. pseudospectabilis*, is found across the Southwest at elevations of 2,000 to 6,000 feet. This beauty produces rose-purple flowers on 3 foot tall spikes from March to May. The interesting leaves are toothed and wrapped around the stem with tightly clasped bases, making this species very easy to identify.

*Penstemon superbus* or Superb Penstemon is also known as the Coral Penstemon for its vivid coral flowers produced on 6 foot tall spikes from April to May. The leaves are blue-green to about 4 inches long. Found at elevations of 3,500 to 5,500 feet, this Chihuahuan Desert beauty is hardy to 5°F.

The Hill Country Penstemon, *P. triflorus*, is a native of Texas. This early bloomer starts the floral parade in February and continues through April. Large deep rose flowers are formed on 2 foot tall flower spikes. It forms a compact bushy plant with strong floral spikes.

Our last Penstemon is *Penstemon wrightii*, sometimes called the Texas Rose. It has a very similar appearance to the Coral or Superb Penstemon, except this plant is more compact, and the flowers are more psychedelic. The floral spikes reach only 4 feet tall.

## POINTS TO PONDER ABOUT PERENNIALS

As with most native plants, drainage is a key factor for survival and longevity. Tight soils should be loosened up with well composted organic matter. Avoid overwatering and fertilization, which will reduce the flowering activity. All perennials are prone to attacks from aphids and other sucking insects but remember that hummingbirds feed on aphids for a source of protein, especially in the spring during nesting season. Have a bit of tolerance if you will.

## GREAT NEWS!

Mountain States Wholesale Nursery is proud to announce that we have received official notification from the United States Trademark and Patent Office that eight of our most notable plant names are now nationally registered trademarks. These plants include *Acacia redolens* Desert Carpet®, *Dalea capitata* Sierra Gold®, *Eremophila maculata* Valentine®, *Leucophyllum langmaniae* Rio Bravo®, *Leucophyllum zygophyllum* Cimarron®, *Muhlenbergia capillaris* Regal Mist®, *Prosopis Phoenix*® and *Prosopis glandulosa* Maverick®.

**Garden Design**, a lifestyle magazine devoted to landscape, décor and furniture, recently named ***Muhlenbergia capillaris*** as one of the **Way Hot 100 Plants for 2006**. Regal Mist® was noted to “produce spectacular clouds of dusky-pink blossoms in the fall.” The grass was also touted as being “so tough that it’s even used in highway plantings.” What nice compliments...

**Thank you Garden Design!**