

Calico Beardtongue *Penstemon calycosus*

Plant Type: Native Perennial Wildflower
Sun Exposure: Full Sun, Part Sun
Season of Interest: All
Bloom Time: Spring, Early Summer
Bloom Color: Pink to Lavender
Height: 28-36 in.
Spread: 16 in.
Spacing: 24 in.
Water Needs: Average
Maintenance: Prune spent flower stalks
Soil Type: Moist, High in organic matter
Soil pH: Acidic, Neutral, Alkaline
Soil Drainage: Well Drained
Pests: Slugs (Deer & Rabbit resistant)
Diseases: None
Wildlife: Bees, Butterflies, Hummingbirds



Description: *Penstemon calycosus* is similar in form to other penstemons but with excitingly variable pale pink to purple flowers. The bright green, pointed foliage remains attractive throughout the season, sometimes tinged with red when grown in full sun. While some individuals sport pale lavender to pink flowers, others are a rich violet. Native to most states east of the Mississippi River and hardy to Zones 4 to 8, it was first described by botanists in the late 1800s. Usually reaching about 24 inches in height, mature clumps will be up to a foot wide. The mounds of foliage remain green tinged with purple all winter.



Blooming in late May and early June, it is a beautiful addition to perennial borders. It is very adaptable to most soil types, performing best in loamy soils, but adapting to disturbed soil profiles in developed areas. It typically occurs in neutral soils in its native habitat and is tolerant of both periods of saturation and drought. While it performs well in the dappled shade of open woodland, full sun intensifies the flower color. *Penstemon calycosus* is also attractive in mass plantings in the landscape. The plants are long-lived in the field and they are not especially susceptible to pests or diseases. For more information see: plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/penstemon

Care and Growing Tips: Due to its wide tolerance of soil moisture, *Penstemon calycosus* is an excellent plant for rain gardens. In a rain garden, it will tolerate standing water for up to 24 hours after a rain event. Maintenance of this plant is minimal. It may be deadheaded in early summer if seed development is unwanted. As is the case with other penstemons, the ripe seed has an unpleasant odor that can be quite noticeable after a rain. Otherwise, care is limited to removing the previous year's stems and foliage.