

***Penstemon eriantherus* Pursh var. *whitedii* (Piper)**

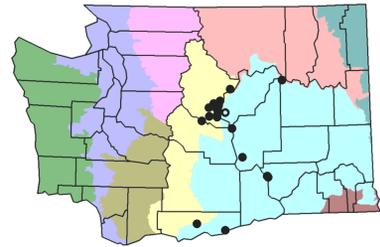
A. Nelson

fuzzytongue penstemon

Scrophulariaceae - figwort family

status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G4T2 / S2



**General Description:** Perennial 2-4 dm tall with several stems; plants grayish-hairy to partly hairless throughout and glandular-hairy in the inflorescence. Leaves opposite, entire or toothed, up to 13 x 2 cm; mostly broadest near the base, and often wholly or partly clasping the stem.

**Floral Characteristics:** Panicles composed of several pairs of well-separated axillary cymes. Calyx elongated, 7-13 mm long, with 5 lanceolate leafy segments. Corolla hairy, tubular, light blue to orchid, 2-4 cm long, mostly 6-14 mm wide at the mouth, strongly inflated, the lower lip moderately longer than the upper; the raised part of the lower lip is strongly bearded with tufts of long hairs. Pollen sacs 1.1-1.8 mm long, 1.5-2.5 times as long as wide when mature, and hairless except for their toothed sutures, which are covered with fine bristles. Sterile stamen more or less protrudes from the corolla and is prominently long-bearded for most of its length. Flowers May to June.

**Fruits:** Capsules 7-12 mm long, glandular-hairy near the tips.

**Identification Tips:** The pollen sacs of *Penstemon eriantherus* var. *whitedii* are 1.5-2.5 times as long as wide, not flattened at maturity, and the two halves have a short line of contact at the base; in contrast, pollen sacs of var. *eriantherus* are approximately as long as wide, become flattened, and have a long line of connection between the two halves. *Penstemon eriantherus* var. *argillosus* and var. *redactus* do not occur in WA. *P. attenuatus* and *P. pruinosus* have shorter calyces (less than 7 mm long), shorter corollas (less than 2.2 cm), and usually hairless capsules.

**Range:** Endemic to eastern WA.

**Habitat/Ecology:** West-facing slopes of small canyons, ridgetops, dry rocky places in the foothills of the Cascades and in the Columbia Basin; sometimes with an abundance of caliche fragments. Elevations: 160-1170 m (500-4000 ft). Associated species include antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), purple sage (*Salvia dorrii*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*).

**Comments:** Threats include agricultural practices, grazing, and off-road vehicles.

**References:** Strickler 1997.



photo by Florence Caplow



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