

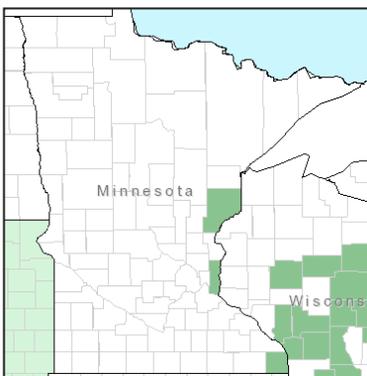
Foxglove beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)

Family: Plantain (*Plantaginaceae*)

DESCRIPTION: Foxglove beardtongue — AKA tall white beardtongue, talus slope penstemon, Mississippi penstemon or Eastern smooth beardtongue — is an erect, clump-forming, showy perennial forb that flowers from May to July. Relatively rare in Minnesota, most known locations in the state are along roadsides and railroad tracks, or within Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas, regional parks or gardens. Across its greater range, *P. digitalis* grows primarily in upland forest clearings, woodland edges, savannas and prairies. Its native range in Minnesota is unclear. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources considers it naturalized. However, it is known to be native in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri and Tennessee.

REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#), [Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden](#), [Native Plant Trust](#), [Illinois Wildflowers](#), [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), [USDA](#), [MN Seasons](#)



Range Map: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: Paul Erdmann, BWSR

Planting Recommendations & Uses

Foxglove beardtongue prefers full sun but can handle partial sun. Loamy, well-drained, medium-dry to moist soils are ideal. *P. digitalis* is most often planted from containers purchased at native plant nurseries. Recommended spacing is 12 to 18 inches apart. Seed is most often planted in the fall to allow for natural cold-moist stratification. The species will self-seed and can spread by rhizomes. Native plant nurseries can suggest suitable species to plant outside its range. Of excellent value for wildlife and pollinators, the species is great for planting in pollinator

gardens, perennial borders and prairie plantings. The tubular flowers attract insects; the thin lines on the lower petals act as guides to the nectar. Its bloom time provides important late spring/early summer resources. Some likely visitors include sphinx moths, skipper and swallowtail butterflies, mason bees, sweat bees, leafcutter bees, bumblebees, and pollen-collecting wasps.

Osmia distincta, a specialist mason bee native to Minnesota, relies on *Penstemons*. Ruby-throated hummingbirds consume its nectar; the plant also attracts songbirds.

STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR STATUS:

Midwest, Northeast, North-central: FAC; Great Plains: FACW

ID: White to pinkish-purple flowers grow in terminal clusters on a 3- to 5-foot-tall plant.

Flowers have five rounded lobes; two on the upper lip, three slightly smaller lobes on the lower. Lanceolate and finely toothed with triangular tips, stalkless, clasping leaves grow in opposite pairs at right angles, widely spaced along erect, hairless stems.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

P. albidus is smaller, with shorter flower stalks. *P. pallidus* has smaller flowers and hairy stems. *P. gracilis* has lilac flowers, and hairs near the base of the stem.

Developed by Kristine Maurer

A senior natural resource and conservation ecologist at Hennepin County, Kristine Maurer earned master's degrees in wildlife ecology and environmental science from Iowa State University. She has worked as an ecologist in Minnesota for seven years.

