

Large beardtongue (*Penstemon grandiflorus*)

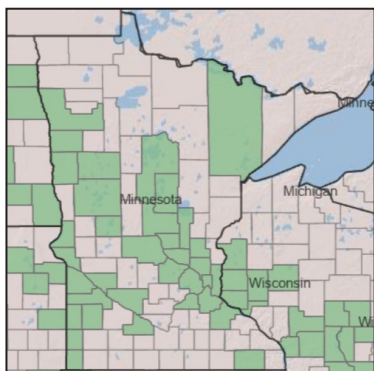
Family: Plantain (Plantaginaceae)

DESCRIPTION: A native perennial found on drier sites, this plant thrives in poor, rocky or sandy soils across Minnesota. It blooms from May to June, with multiple pairs of large flowers lining a single stem. Its name refers to the hairy, bearded sterile fifth stamen, which protrudes along the bottom of the flower's throat toward its opening.

USES: Large beardtongue provides early season nectar and pollen, and adds color to gardens. The attractive dried seed stalk adds visual interest throughout the winter. This species is commonly visited by bumblebees, long-tongued bees and hummingbirds. It is a host plant for the Chalcedon checkerspot and Edith's checkerspot butterflies.

REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
[Illinois Wildflowers](#)
[Minnesota Seasons](#)



Range Map Credit: USDA Plants Database



Photo Credit: Ann Wessel

**STATEWIDE
WETLAND
INDICATOR
STATUS:** None

ID: Leaves are blue-green with a waxy coating. Lower leaves are stalkless and opposite along a hairless, unbranched stem; upper leaves clasp the stem. The plant can reach up to 2 feet tall with three to nine pairs of flowers emerging along a single stem. Trumpet-shaped flowers range from light lavender to pinkish-purple, with five white stamens inside the tube and several dark lines that guide pollinators. The flower's upper lip has two lobes; the lower lip has three.

SIMILAR SPECIES:

When not in bloom, the basal leaves and fruitless stems of large beardtongue may be mistaken for Balkan catchfly (*Silene csereii*) or Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*). However, catchfly has sharply pointed leaf tips, while toadflax has alternate leaves.

Planting Recommendations

Large beardtongue does well in restorations and home gardens. Seeds are best sown in the fall, as they require 30 days of cold, moist stratification and cool soil temperatures to break dormancy. This species is well-suited for challenging planting sites with high sand or gravel content. Avoid overwatering or planting on consistently moist sites, as root rot can be an issue. Seed collection is easiest in

fall and winter, when the dry seed capsules crack open. Each capsule holds dozens of angular seeds. While they tend to be a short-lived perennial, new plants can take root nearby when wind disperses the seed. Create or leave areas of bare soil around the plant to enhance seed-to-soil contact. During peak bloom, the flower spikes stand out nicely against a backdrop of native grasses and prairie alumroot.

Developed by Rhyen Schicker, Lac qui Parle SWCD district manager, native landscaping enthusiast and Lawns to Legumes coach

