

Penstemon

“Husker Red”

Penstemon 'Husker Red' thrives in full sun to partial shade with well-drained soil, preferring sandy loam or gravelly types. It's important to avoid clay soil and maintain consistent moisture, especially when establishing, to prevent root rot. Once established, it's drought-tolerant but benefits from a weekly inch of water, particularly in warmer climates. Perennial. Deer and rabbit resistant. Attracts hummingbirds.

Detailed Growing Guide:

- **Sunlight:** Plant in an area receiving full sun (6-8 hours daily) for best bloom production and vibrant foliage color. Partial shade is also suitable.
- **Soil:** Penstemons prefer well-draining soil. Sandy loam or gravelly soils are ideal. Avoid clay soils, which can lead to root rot.
- **Watering:** Water well on planting and regularly until the plant is established. Once established, it is drought-tolerant but can still benefit from a weekly inch of water, especially in warmer climates.
- **Soil Preparation:** Amend heavy clay soil with organic matter like compost or well-rotted manure to improve drainage.
- **Fertilizing:** A light application of balanced fertilizer in the spring can help support new growth and blooming, but penstemons are not heavy feeders.
- **Spacing:** Plant Penstemon 'Husker Red' 12-18 inches apart to allow for proper air circulation and growth.
- **Pruning:** Deadhead spent flowers to encourage continuous blooming. Cut back plants in late autumn or early spring to promote vigorous growth. This plant benefits from support during blooming.
- **Propagation:** Penstemon 'Husker Red' can be propagated by seed, softwood cuttings, or semi-ripe stem tip cuttings.

- **Pests and Diseases:** Watch for slugs, snails, and nematodes. Fungal diseases like powdery mildew, leaf spot, and root rot can occur in overly wet conditions. Rust can also be a problem.
- **Mulching:** Use organic mulches like shredded bark, compost, or pine straw to regulate soil temperature and suppress weeds. Ensure the mulch doesn't touch the stems to prevent rot.