

Blowout Penstemon

Even the toughest customer needs a little help now and then....

Sand dunes can be very hot or cold, dry and windy – a pretty tough place for most plants to thrive.

Blowouts are open areas near the tops of sand dunes that are created by the wind constantly shifting the sands. They can be the windiest and driest parts of the dunes, but they provide the perfect conditions for the blowout penstemon (*Penstemon haydenii*). This showy, short-lived perennial flower thrives in these blowouts because there is little competition for moisture and

nutrients. In fact, the blowing sand scarifies the seeds so they germinate, and it even stimulates plant growth.

The blowout penstemon is the only plant in Nebraska that is listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in 1968. Then it was listed as endangered in 1987.

The blowout penstemon is in danger because its habitat is shrinking. This is caused by controlling wildfires and

improving grazing practices which together result in healing the blowouts. In 1992, Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands and its partners started the process of restoring populations. Today, thanks to these efforts, there is a thriving, but still fragile, population on Forest Service land. Research, plant propagation, and monitoring continue so that we can better understand the ecology of the blowout penstemon, expand its population, and protect its habitat.

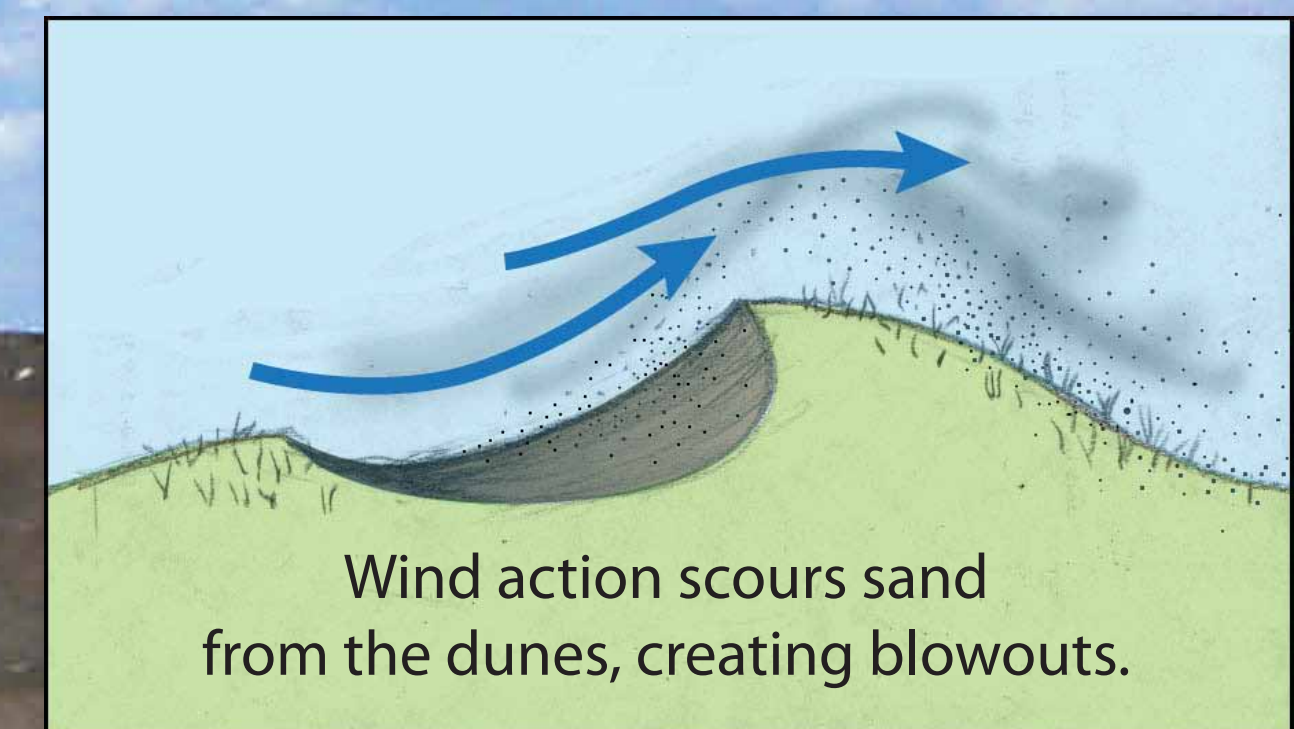
To learn more about the blowout penstemon, visit the Forest Service office or take a brochure from the holder below.



Photo: USDA Forest Service



Photo: USDA Forest Service



USDA Forest Service
**Bessey
Nursery**

**American
Penstemon
Society**

Also helping over the years:
University of Nebraska and
the ARS National Center
for Genetic Resources Preservation.

Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands

