

Pasque Flower



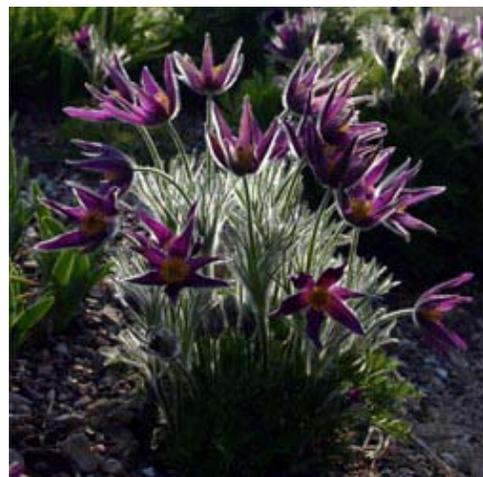
Pasque flower is one of the earliest blooming perennials.

central and northern continental Europe and the British Isles. It is hardy in zones 4-8. Although all parts of this plant are toxic and may cause stomach upset if ingested, it has been used medicinally for a variety of complaints – to treat infected sores, curing lameness from varicose veins, venereal disease and headaches.

The plant has a thick and fibrous rootstock that becomes woody with age. The finely divided, stalked leaves emerge from this base in early spring, although the majority of the leaves develop after the flowers. The leaves are pinnate, cleft to the base, forming a mound 10-12" tall. The entire plant is covered with soft, silvery hairs. Plants remain attractive through the summer, although the leaves may die back in late summer.

Pasque flower is one of the first herbaceous perennials to bloom in spring. There are about 30 species in the genus *Pulsatilla* of the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae), but the most common one planted in gardens is the European pasque flower, *Pulsatilla vulgaris*. *Pulsatilla* is closely related to the genus *Anemone*; *P. vulgaris* was once classified as *A. pulsatilla* and is still often listed under this name. Other common names include wind flower, meadow anemone, and Easter flower.

P. vulgaris is native to dry meadows of



Pasque flower is a low-growing plant.



The flowers begin emerging before the leaves come out all the way, and bloom in shades of purple.

color Easter eggs in some European countries. Color in the species varies from deep to pale purple, and occasionally white.

Upright, bell-shaped flowers emerge shortly after the first leaves. The 1½" flowers are borne singly on stems 5-8" tall. The huge purple goblets are furry on the outside and silky inside, with bright golden stamens. The juice of the purple sepals produces a non-permanent stain, which has been used to

Cultivars have been developed with more red in the flowers and there are some selections that differ slightly from the species:

- *P. v. ssp. gotlandica* has more rounded petals.
- 'Alba' has creamy white flowers. It tends to be slower growing and later blooming.
- 'Papageno' is a mix of creamy white, bright pink, dark red, violet and blue flowers that are fringed and semi-double.
- 'Rote Glocke' has deep crimson flowers. Also called 'Red Bells' or 'Red Cloak,' it blooms later than the species.
- 'Rubra' has a wine-red flower.



The cultivar 'Rubra' has red flowers.

Fertilized flowers produce a spherical seedhead with silky plume-like styles. The attractive silvery seedheads remain on the plant for several weeks. Ripe seed is dispersed by the wind.



The feathery seed heads are produced and remain on the plant, looking quite ornamental, for several weeks before being dispersed by the wind.

This low growing plant is suitable for rock gardens or the front of the perennial border. Pasque flower combines well with spring-flowering bulbs and ground covers.

Grow pasque flower in well-drained soil in full sun. It does not tolerate root disturbance well, but can be transplanted. Cut back all of the open flowers and large buds before moving; the plant should produce new growth and become lush and rebloom in about 4 weeks. Do not fertilize heavily. This species is quite drought tolerant once established. Unfortunately deer like it, so it may need protection in some areas.



Pasque flower is a good addition to the rock garden.

Pasque flower is propagated by seed, root cuttings, or division. Sow seeds when ripe in situ or in small containers to later transplant when still small. Pasque flower may self-seed. One mature plant can be divided into 4 to 6 new plants.

There are several other species of *Pulsatilla* that are good garden plants:

- *P. grandis* (or *P. halleri* spp. *grandis*) has extremely dense silver or brownish hairs on the stems and leaves and large, lilac-blue flowers. It grows to about 10" tall.
- *P. halleri taurica* blooms earlier than *P. vulgaris* (about the same time as crocus or the earliest daffodils), with the purple flowers emerging before any of the leaves and on extremely short stems. This subspecies is an excellent rock garden plant that only grows about 6" tall. There are

5 subspecies of *P. halleri* that differ mainly in their leaves, from rocky alpine meadows in different areas of Europe.



Pulsatilla halleri taurica in bud and in bloom in a rock garden.

- ✔ *P. patens*, from meadows and prairies of northern Europe, northern Asia and North America from Illinois to Alaska, has a lilac flower. Zones 3-8.
- ✔ *P. pratensis* has dark violet flowers.
- ✔ *P. vernalis* is evergreen, with smooth divided leaves, and white flowers with a bluish purple reverse. It forms a clump only 2-6" tall.

– Susan Mahr, University of Wisconsin

Additional Information:

- ✔ *Pulsatilla vulgaris* – on the Missouri Botanic Garden's Kemper Center for Home Gardening website at www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/Plant.asp?code=B350