

Indian Paintbrush

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(Castilleja species)



Indian paintbrush is a colorful wild flower growing among sagebrush, juniper, and rocks all over eastern Oregon (xl/2).

Where does it grow? It is found from low to high elevations, but usually in the open. An attractive colorful addition to the plant life all over eastern Oregon. About 35 different kinds of paintbrush are found in Oregon, so this concerns the entire group, rather than any one species. The one pictured is Castilleja angustifolia.

Is it important? It is not good for cattle feed, but early in the spring sheep will nibble on it. We can rate it highly if we count its value for making our ranges more beautiful in late May and early June.

What does it look like? This plant has either one or many purplish, woody stems coming up from the ground and is topped with red, orange, or yellow, three-fingered bracts that enclose the blossom. Stands are seldom dense, so the individual plants show up bright and very noticeable among gray, less attractive vegetation. They are usually 12 to 18 inches tall.

Description:

Length of life -- Perennial.

Height -- Usually 1 to 1 1/2 feet.

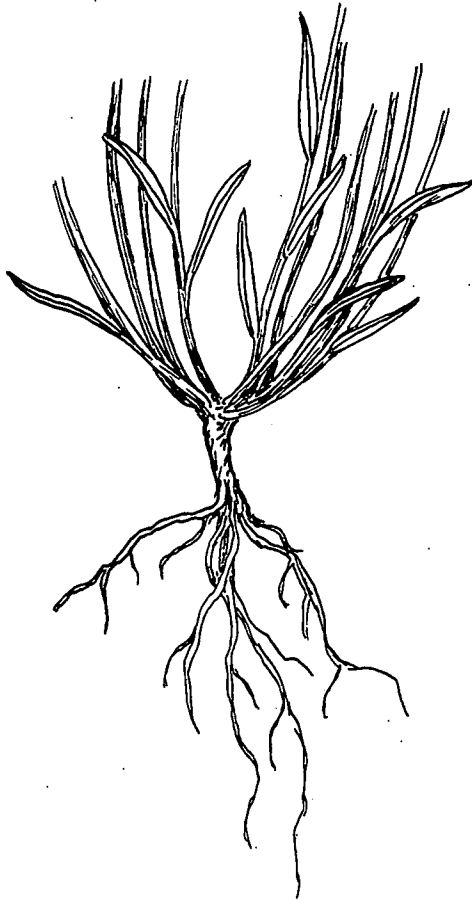
Method of spread -- Mainly by seeds.

Growth period -- Early spring. Flowers in May and sets seed in early to mid June, later at high elevations.

Leaves -- Are 2 to 4 inches long, and narrow. They are attached alternately on the stem and often are covered with fine hairs. Tips of leaves of some varieties are toothed.



Flowers are near the tips of the flower stalks. The colorful parts are actually bracts enclosing the flowers (xl).



Stem -- Woody, with heavy ridges that make the stem look like it has about 5 flat sides. Near the top the stems are usually purple and hairy.

Flowers -- Very showy. As with poinsettias and some other flowers, the showy parts are not the petals, but are bracts that enclose the flowers.

Seeds -- Numerous seeds are borne in prominent pods with short stems.

Other names -- Paintbrush and painted cup.

Does it look like anything else?
With its bright red flowers and colorful bracts around the flowers and seed pods, it slightly resembles the snapdragon.

Paintbrush roots are perennial, strong, fibrous and, in many species, are reported to feed to some extent upon roots of other plants.