

# NATIVE PERENNIALS

## Pasque flower, Native



*Pulsatilla patens*

Native. South Dakota State Flower. Earliest wildflower to bloom! Delicate cup-shaped lavender flowers appear on hairy stalks as soon as the snow melts. Tolerates dry gravelly soil. Often found growing on grassy hillsides. Grows 6" tall.

**Description:** Pasque flower is a perennial form 4 to 12 inches tall. Flowering begins in April or May when flower stalks emerge before the leaves expand. Flowers are tulip-like, 1 to 2 inches long, varying in color from nearly white to pinkish-violet. Leaves are densely silky when young, mostly basal, and dissected into many, narrow, linear divisions. As achenes ripen in a cluster, they are tipped with long, feathery beaks.

**Distribution/Habitat:** Pasque flower ranges from Alaska to Illinois and Missouri, New Mexico and Washington. It also occurs across Eurasia. In South Dakota, pasque flower is found on grassy hillsides and in open wooded areas across the state.

**Comments:** Pasque flower is also called wild crocus, windflower, or may flower. Soon after snow melts, or before it melts for the last time, pasque flower charms the prairies with large downy buds and then hardy, short-lived blossoms. This plains beauty is the state flower of South Dakota (elected queen of flower land by the legislature of South Dakota, need never fear to stand in any flower company, however distinguished, however beautiful, however charming.) Pasque flower is normally not preferred by livestock. Where deer are concentrated in spring, they can eliminate pasque flower. Pasque flower has been used to some extent medicinally. Dakota gave it special significance as the first flower of spring, believing its song encouraged other plants to awaken from their winter sleep and come up from the heart of the earth

**Credit:** James E. Johnson & Gary E. Larson, Grassland Plants of South Dakota and the Northern Great Plains. SDSU, Brookings, SD. B-566 (rev.) August 1999. Page 222.

**Photo Credit:** Big Sioux Nursery, Inc.

