



The Scottish Rock Garden Club Forrest Medal Highland Show Nairn 2012 Astragalus utahensis Shown by Sam Sutherland



Sam has shown at different SRGC shows, three wonderful Astragalus plants this year. They had all been grown by Sam from 'Alplains' seed and all were the result of several years careful nurture. Astragalus have a reputation for being difficult to row well in cultivation but Sam has shown that when you provide the right conditions and look after the seedlings you can raise magnificent plants. **Astragalus utahensis** as its name implies comes from Utah in the USA. It has quite a wide distribution in the contiguous states of Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming Utah and Nevada. It is a plant of dry areas in the intermountain area of these states. It flowers in early spring. As you can see it is a member of the Pea family and has the colloquial name of Utah Milkvech.or locoweed. If only all vetches were this interesting of worthwhile! Rugged Country Mountain Plants summed it up when they wrote;- '*Short and exquisite, Utah Ladyfinger Milkvech is a must-have. The low-growing, silvery, pinnate leaves are striking, plus it outdoes itself with a mid-spring cover of showy hot pink flowers. The Astragalus Genus was called "Locoweed" by cattle herders of old. It is poisonous to livestock, so avoid planting where animals graze.*' **Utah Ladyfinger** is an alternative name used by the INPGA [Intermountain Plants Growers Association]. They are promoting it as a lovely low water ground cover or desert rock garden addition for dryland American landscapes - and rightly so. But you can't sell it with weed in the name. Sam told me he had already taken off over 40 flower stems from his award plant. This is probably the first Astragalus to win a Forrest medal. Well done Sam!