

# Narrowleaf Indian paintbrush

Scientific name: *Castilleja angustifolia* (Nutt.) G. Don

Common names: Narrowleaf paintbrush, Northwestern Indian paintbrush

To start the summer off, the first wildflower we will spotlight is an Indian paintbrush. There are approximately 17 species of paintbrush found in the state of Wyoming. The species pictured here looks very similar to the linearleaf or Wyoming Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja linariifolia* Benth.) which was adopted as the Wyoming state flower in 1917.

An interesting fact about Indian paintbrushes, is that they are hemiparasitic. This means that although they have chlorophyll to capture sunlight for sugar production, they attach themselves parasitically onto the roots of a host plant in order to get adequate water and nutrients from the soil because they lack their own developed root systems. Sagebrush plants and some perennial grasses with vast root systems are excellent host plants for Indian paintbrushes. Due to the fact that they are hemiparasitic, it is difficult to transplant Indian paintbrushes or grow them in a garden from seeds.

Indian paint brushes can be found throughout Uinta County in a variety of habitats from dry to moist. They vary in color from red and pink to yellow and orange. The flowers of Indian paintbrushes are actually quite inconspicuous, so the color you see is not technically the flower itself but bracts, or modified leaves, bearing color.

