

Mentzelia lindleyi

[Synonyms : *Bartonia aurea*]

BARTONIA is an annual. Native to central California (south-western United States) it has orange-red based, golden flowers with protruding stamens.

It is also known as Barton's flower, Blazing star, Chili nettle, Cloth of gold, Cup of gold, Golden bartonia, *Gullstråle* (Swedish), *Kultatupsu* (Finnish), and Lindley's blazing star.

The flowers open at night and have a sweet fragrance. The whole plant is covered in barbed hairs which attach themselves to anything they brush.

Lindleyi commemorates an English botanist, horticulturist, orchid specialist, botanical artist and author (over 200 publications), John Lindley (1799-1865) who became the first professor of botany at University College London from 1829 to 1860. He knew all the botanists of his era, several of whom gave him his initial encouragement and support. Throughout his life he was an articulate and avid supporter of a natural form of plant classification and his work would contribute significantly to subsequent botanical nomenclature. In 1819 Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) appointed him as assistant librarian in his library and herbarium. In 1820 he began to build his own herbarium which by 1865 would contain about 58,000 specimen sheets of plants from all over the world. Then Lindley oversaw the establishment of The Horticultural Society of London's (now RHS or The Royal Horticultural Society) Chiswick garden in 1821 and, to save the Society from bankruptcy, he organised the first annual flower show in Britain there. He was the author of an 1828 report on the royal gardens at Kew – a report that not only prevented their destruction but also led to the establishment of the Royal Botanic Garden. In 1836 he became lecturer in botany to the Apothecaries' Company, a post held until 1853. He gave advice to government bodies, private companies and individuals on botanical matters, for instance, the Inland Revenue on coffee and its adulteration, Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850) on the potato blight in Ireland, where the Hudson's Bay Company was concerned matters of exploration, and reforestation and cultivation of Ascension Island for the Admiralty. His association with Australia included writing plant descriptions from the specimens collected during the four Australian expeditions (1831, 1835, 1836 and 1845-1847) of the Scottish explorer, Major Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell (1792-1855), and involvement in the appointment of a Director for the Sydney Botanic Garden (New South Wales), Charles Moore (1820-1905) who would hold the post from 1848-1896. Lindley lectured extensively and is said to have given as many as 19 different ones in any week. He edited and contributed to many journals in particular from 1841-1865 *The Gardeners' Chronicle* (absorbed in the 1980s into *Horticulture Week*) of which he was a co-founder. In 1820 he became a Fellow of both the Linnean Society of London and The Geological Society of London, followed in 1821 by membership of the Imperial Academy of Natural History in Bonn and, in 1828, a Fellow of The Royal Society. He received an honorary Doctor of Philosophy from Munich University in 1832. 1853 saw his election as a corresponding member of the French Institute and The Royal Society awarded him their Royal Medal in 1857. 1300 botanical books from John Lindley's personal library were bought by RHS after Lindley's death and formed the basis of the Society's Lindley Library in London. Additionally the Society awards its Lindley Medal at flower shows for exhibits of special

scientific or educational interest. John Lindley's many published works the major ones include *A Natural System of Botany*, *The Fossil Flora of Great Britain* (written with William Hutton), *Elements of Botany*, *Theory and Practice of Horticulture*, *The Vegetable Kingdom*, and *Folia Orchidacea*.
Bartonia is cultivated as an ornamental plant.