



# Wildflower Hotline

Every Weekend March through May

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Welcome to the **29th Annual Wildflower Hotline**, brought to you by the Theodore Payne Foundation, a non-profit plant nursery, seed source, book store, and education center dedicated to the preservation of wildflowers and California native plants. This is our first report of the year, and new reports will be posted each Friday through the end of May.

Our winter weather has been fickle. Good rainfall in December and early January encouraged germination of many seedlings and gave promise of an early, bright, bloom. Then came a five week spell of dry, relatively warm conditions. Some early blooms went over fast, others did not flower for lack of moisture. Warm and dry turned again into fierce, fast, and in some cases, frozen storms and below normal temperatures. Continued cool temperatures have delayed flowering of early to mid spring species of annuals. Some perennials and woody shrubs are beginning to peak at low elevations and coastal regions. Definitely, the best blooms are to be found in the southernmost coastal and desert regions this week.

Heading south along the California coast, be sure to visit the [Environmental Nature Center](#) in Newport Beach. Exceptional blooming plants along their trails and plant communities this week include California wild lilac, (*Ceanothus* spp.), Western redbud, (*Cercis occidentalis*), live forevers, (*Dudleya* spp.), California

poppy, (*Eschscholzia californica*), and blue-eyed grass, (*Sisyrinchium bellum*).



Environmental Nature Center - Ceanothus

Photo courtesy of and © Lori Whalen

Continue south to San Diego County, home of [Torrey Pines State Natural Preserve](#). There, lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), warty-stem ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*) are decorated with climbing wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus* var. *macrocarpus*). You cannot help but notice the stunning and abundant purple nightshade (*Solanum parishii*) competing for your attention. Ground level

patches of beach sand verbena (*Abronia umbellata*) and fringed ground pink (*Linanthus dianthiflorus*) form a quilt of pinkish hues. Some trails in the reserve

are closed for repair after winter storm damage. Check in at the Visitor Center to ask about the status of popular trails.

Heading east from the coast to the inland valleys, chaparral and woodlands of the Cleveland National Forest – destination Anza Borrego - you will be treated to a mosaic of lush greens and greys of these rain nourished communities. Explore this area in the next few weeks when they pop into bloom.

Once you hit Interstate 15 and, before continuing east to Anza Borrego, you might want to detour north to the Santa Rosa Plateau in southern Riverside County. Exit I-15 on Clinton Keith Road and head west for an adventure into the premier vernal pool habitat of Southern California.

The [Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve](#) offers several excellent hiking trails. The most popular are the Vernal Pool, Trans Preserve and the Hidden Valley Trails. Here is what you are going to encounter along one or more of these routes through the preserve. Blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum* ssp. *capitatum*) are poking up everywhere. Yellow carpet (*Blennosperma nanum* var. *nanum*) can be seen near the Vernal Pools. Shooting stars (*Dodecatheon clevelandii* ssp. *clevelandii*) are covering gentle slopes along the pathways and miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata* ssp. *mexicana*) can be found in nooks and crannies around boulders and under the oaks. Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea malviflora* ssp. *sparsifolia*), milk maids (*Cardamine californica* var. *californica*), California peony (*Paeonia californica*), red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*), and California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) are very photo worthy as well.

Entering [Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#), from the west, descending into Montezuma Pass along SR22 to Borrego Valley, you see scattered but sometimes dense patches of cheery yellow flowers along the canyon faces. Fortunately there are many good turnouts along this highway to safely stop and check out the displays. These showy yellow exhibits are mostly heart-leaf primrose, (*Camissonia cardiophylla* ssp. *cardiophylla*) and desert sunflower (*Gerea canescens*). The lavender-blue of common phacelia (*Phacelia distans*) and notch-leafed phacelia (*Phacelia crenulata*), can be seen among the yellow, making a nice color combination. On the valley floor and spreading into lower washes of adjacent Little Surprise, Coyote, Henderson, Borrego Palm, and Gloreitta Canyons, are ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens* ssp. *splendens*), California fagonia (*Fagonia laevis*), desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*), white forget-me-nots (*Cryptantha* spp.), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), white desert pincushion (*Chaenactis fremontii*), rock daisy (*Perityle emoryi*), and fiddlenecks (*Amsinckia menziesii* var. *intermedia*). There are concentrations of belly flowers, woolly eriophyllum (*Eriophyllum wallacei*), and Bigelow's monkeyflower (*Mimulus bigelovii*) along the trails and washes.

Heading north into the Palm Springs area, try hiking in one or more of the [Indian Canyons](#) at the base of the snow covered San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mtns.

Right now in Tahquitz and Andreas Canyons, the chuparosa (*Justicia californica*) has the canyon mouths ablaze in red. Along the open area trails of lower Andreas Canyon many plants are just beginning to peak and include desert lavender (*Hyptis emoryi*), bristly fiddleneck (*Amsinckia tessalata*), forget-me-nots (*Cryptantha* spp.), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*), desert bell (*Phacelia campanularia*), and desert apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*).

Continuing northeast, check out the bright bloom of early perennials as you enter [Joshua Tree National Park](#) at the southern (Cottonwood) entrance. You can't help but get warmed on these still cool, windy spring days by looking at the riotous yellow bladderpod (*Isomeris arborea*), and red chuparosa (*Justicia californica*). Imagine what it will be like after a few warm weeks.

Heading back toward Los Angeles, check out the carefully tended blooms at [Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden](#) in Claremont. Showy shrubs along trails throughout the garden include manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), California wild lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.), barberry (*Berberis* spp.), island bush poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*), gooseberries and currants (*Ribes* spp.) and sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*). The truly great experience of walking the garden pathways at this time of year is taking in the lovely aroma of the California wild lilacs. There are so many in this garden.

Back to the coast and nestled in the [Santa Monica Mountains](#), you will find many trails much to see. Check ahead on trail conditions before starting out as some may have erosion damage from the heavy winter rainfall. At the eastern end of the range, around the LA Zoo and nearby Griffith Park, the intriguing little succulent, lance leaf dudleya (*Dudleya lanceolata*) can be found growing at eye level and above in the crumbly cliff faces and outcroppings along trails. Profuse blooms on their long flower stalks are beginning to open. There are also many, many California wild lilacs, buck brushes (*Ceanothus* spp.) to enjoy as well.

Further west, trekking in Zuma and Trancas Canyons can be a delight for flower lovers. Favorable weather conditions have encouraged robust growth and flowering of scarlet red Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja* spp.). Other "eye candy" include clusters of dark-throated shooting star (*Dodecatheon pulchellum*), Parry's phacelia (*Phacelia parryi*), fuchsia flowering gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*), blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*) and virgin's bower (*Clematis lasiantha*) clambering over shrubs and trees. Sunny slopes are lit up bright yellow with bush sunflowers (*Encelia californica*) and dotted with full-bloom white and blue California wild lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.)

For a delightful stroll visit [Descanso Gardens](#) in La Cañada Flintridge and behold the gloriously radiant flannel bush (*Fremontodendron* sp.), Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*) and California wild lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.) before they fade away.

Visit the [Placerita Canyon Natural Area](#), off HWY 14. for views of California peony (*Paeonia californica*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), hoary leaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*), hairy leaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus oliganthus*), purple nightshade (*Solanum parishii*), golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), and the sweet little “I-always-miss-it because-it-blooms-so-early” milkmaids (*Cardamine californica*). We’ve been told that these plants can be found along the Placerita Creek right now.



Placerita Canyon - Peony

Photo courtesy of and © Ron Kraus

Head northeast to the Sierra foothills [Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks](#). Coming in to peak bloom on Hwy 198, along Kaweah Reservoir are fiddleneck (*Amsinkia menziesii*), forget-me-nots (*Cryptantha* spp.), buck brush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*); and in the foothill regions of Three Rivers, Mariposa manzanita, (*Arctostaphylos viscida*), and the spectacular silver bush lupine (*Lupinus albifrons*).

The steady rains at [Death Valley National Park](#) promise to bring swaths of blooms to Furnace Creek and Scotty’s Castle once the temperatures warm, so keep your eye on this location as we head further into March.

That’s it for this week. Look for our next report on **Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup>** and check back each week for the most up to date information on southern and central California wildflowers.

If you would like to be a wildflower reporter send your information about wildflower blooms and their location to [flowerhotline@theodorepayne.org](mailto:flowerhotline@theodorepayne.org) by Wednesday of each week when blooms of note occur.

### **NATIVE PLANT & WILDFLOWER EVENTS:**

#### **Theodore Payne Foundation**

- **Annual Poppy Day** on Saturday, **March 26<sup>th</sup> 8:30am 4:30 pm** featuring a native plant sale, vendors, exhibits, and tours of the nursery and grounds. Members receive a 15% discount on plant purchases of one gallon and up and the general public receives a 10% discount.

- **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Native Plant Garden Tour**, Saturday and Sunday, **April 9 & 10** from 10 am – 4pm. For tickets (Cost \$20 for two days) and more information on the over 30 gardens included on this self-guided tour, visit our [webpage](#).

### **California Native Plant Society Chapters**

#### **CNPS-San Diego Chapter**

Field trips:

- Sat., **March 5**: Carmel Mountain Preserve (**9:00am – noon**)  
(<http://www.cnpssd.org/field.html#mar5>)

#### **CNPS-Riverside/San Bernardino Chapter**

Field Trips:

- Sat., March 19: Santa Rosa Plateau (**9:30 am – noon**)  
(<http://www.enceliacnps.org>)