



# Wildflower Hotline

Every Weekend March through May

(818) 768-3533

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 fourth report of the year, and new reports will be posted each Friday through the end of May.

The calendar indicates the first week of spring, but the weather is behaving like the first week of winter! Rain, snow and cool temperatures continue to keep areas north of the LA Basin in a holding pattern. Flowers are waiting for warmer conditions before opening. Please check ahead before embarking on any outing as many roads and trails may have weather related damage or closures.

You can enjoy seeing the native plants of California's Channel Islands without the boat trip (and seasickness)! Just stroll the pathways at the [Environmental Nature Center](#) in Newport Beach. Island bush poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*), dudleya (*Dudleya* spp.), island snapdragon (*Galvesia speciosa*), island mallow (*Lavatera assurgentiflora*), Catalina currant (*Ribes viburnifolium*), Catalina cherry (*Prunus illicifolia* ssp. *lyonii*) grow and bloom on the mainland here. Enjoy a stroll through all the plant communities and delight in many other flowering trees, shrubs and wildflowers as well.

Travel south to San Diego County, home of [Torrey Pines State Natural Preserve](#). Peak bloom is occurring throughout the park. Blue and white flowered ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.) species beacon you from the canyon slopes. Other shrubs are showing off bright yellow blossoms, and include Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevini*), bladderpod (*Isomeris arborea*), rock rose (*Helianthemum scoparium*), and bush poppy (*Dendromecon rigida*). These woody plants are often laced with the climbing pink San Diego rose pea (*Lathyrus vestitus* var. *alefeldii*). Annuals found along the trails, include San Diego sea dahlia (*Coreopsis maritima*), goldfields (*Lasthenia coronaria*), and tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*). The blues, reds and purple of Arroyo lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*), parry's phacelia (*Phacelia paryii*), coast paintbrush (*Castilleja affinis* ssp. *affinis*) and owl's clover (*Castilleja exserta* ssp. *exserta*), stand out among the more subtle cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*), Chinese houses (*Collinsia heterophylla*), and shooting stars (*Dodecatheon clevelandii* ssp. *clevelandii*). Flowers of bulb plants are poking above ground for their spring extravaganza. Look for the showy upright stalks of wild onion (*Allium haematochiton*), blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*), star-lily (*Zigadenus fremontii*), golden stars (*Bloomeria clevelandii*), and blue dicks (*Dichelostema capitatum* ssp. *capitatum*). Where there is loose sand underfoot, you'll find patches of pink and red sand verbena (*Abronia* spp). Some pathways in the reserve are closed for repair. Check in at the Visitor Center to ask about the status of popular trails.

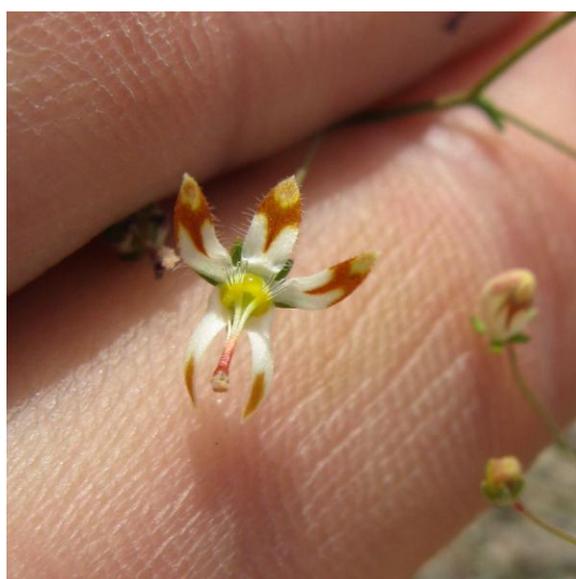
Heading east toward the desert regions and just before descending into Anza Borrego, wildflowers are starting to appear off Hwy 79 around the [Cuyamaca Rancho State Park](#). The meadows near Lake Cuyamaca and along S-1 are coming alive with sunny yellow common stickyseed (*Blennosperma nanum*), and Johnny jump-up (*Viola pedunculata*). Throughout the park various species of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.) are filled with blooms. For a special treat, take a trip to the Lone Pine Campground to view the southwestern bitterroot (*Lewisia brachycalyx*).

This is turning out to be a good year for cacti at [Anza Borrego Desert State Park](#). The first hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus engelmannii*) was seen in flower, with peak bloom coming soon for these colorful, prickly characters. Yellow-lime green flowers, sometimes tinged coral, are starting to appear on the silver cholla (*Opuntia echinocarpa*), and blooms atop the barrel cactus (*Ferocactus cylindraceus*) form bright golden crowns. More and more clumps of beavertail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris*) are brilliant with their hot-pink blossoms. The red-flowered fishhook cactus (*Mammalaria dioica*) was an early bloomer this year, but you can still find some hiding about in crevices. There are still good patches of annuals throughout the park as you wander around the canyons and washes.

If you are staying at a Palm Springs resort, visit Oswit Canyon for an easy hike. Oswit is located on South Palm Canyon Drive and is part of the [San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains National Monument](#). The yellow brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*) and red chuparosa (*Justicia californica*) are splendid from afar. Walking along the bajada trails, you will encounter more vibrant colors of yellow desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*),

blue-purple chia (*Salvia columbariae*), Arizona lupine (*Lupinus arizonicus*), and indigo bush (*Psoralea schottii*), the coral colored desert mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), white and maroon rock hibiscus (*Hibiscus denutatus*), and royal blue desert bells (*Phacelia campanularia*).

The highway south of Interstate 10 that takes you to Mecca along [Box Canyon/Mecca Hills](#) Road is still the premier spot for wildflower viewing in the local desert region. The roadway is lined with riotous blue and yellow of Arizona lupine (*Lupinus arizonicus*), and desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*) mixed with little gold poppy (*Eschscholzia minutiflora*). Stop at Shavers Well for the showiest display of flowers reported anywhere to date. Hundreds of ghostflower (*Mohavea confertiflora*), blazing star (*Mentzelia involucrata*), gravel ghost (*Atrichoseris platyphylla*), Parish's poppy (*Eschscholzia parishii*), notch-leaf phacelia (*Phacelia crenulata*), and rush pea (*Caesolopinneae virgata*), carpet the washes. The bright belly flowers of desert star (*Monoptilon bellioides*), Bigelow's monkey flower (*Mimulus bigelovii*), yellowhead (*Trichoptilium incisum*), thread stem (*Nemacladus* spp.) and purple mat (*Nama demissum*) are scattered among them. This is definitely the hottest spot not to miss!



Thread stem (*Nemacladus rubescens*) at Shavers Well, photo Tommy Stoughton

Still the best flower displays at [Joshua Tree National Park](#) are near the southern park entrance although the bloom is beginning to spread north through the park but slowly because of the cool weather. Fields of yellow Parish's poppy (*Eschscholzia parishii*) and little gold poppy (*Eschscholzia minutiflora*) chia (*Salvia columbariae*) brown-eyed primrose (*Camissonia claviformis*), Arizona lupine (*Lupinus arizonicus*), desert bells (*Phacelia campanularia*) and chuparosa (*Justicia californica*) can be seen along the easy and accessible Bajada Nature Trail. This trail starts from a large parking area off the road just north from the I-10 exit to Joshua Tree. In fact, if you pull off the road anywhere and explore the washes and canyons south of the entrance, you will find good wildflower viewing. Within the Park and heading to 29 Palms, good displays of coreopsis (*Coreopsis* sp.) and Wallaces' woolly daisies (*Eriophyllum wallacei*) abound in Willson Canyon where the Park road rises north of the Cholla Garden. The best way to see wildflowers is to stop the car, park safely and walk around. The more you look, the more you see!

Most of the bloom in the Needles area is still restricted to along roadways, with brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*) being the most common plant in bloom. One area of significance is [Amboy Crater](#), with nice examples of sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*), desert sunflower (*Geraea canescens*), and desert lily (*Hesperocallis undulata*) greeting you along the trail from the day use area to the base of the crater.

Northwest of Joshua Tree National Park along Hwy 395 around Kramer Junction, large areas of goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) spread out among the shrubs. Just south of Kramer Junction, there are some large displays of desert candle (*Caulanthus inflatus*) in full bloom. Seeing stands of these alien looking plants is definitely a thrill for plant geeks. Also bordering the highway are desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*), desert bells (*Phacelia* spp.), and coreopsis (*Coreopsis bigelovii*).

Heading north on Hwy 395 to Lone Pine, detour off the highway through [Alabama Hills](#) to explore this unique recreation area. Alabama Hills are a "range of hills" and rock formations near the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the Owens Valley. There are a few very showy things blooming including fiddleneck (*Amsinckia tessellata*), desert paintbrush (*Castilleja chromosa*), yellow throats (*Phacelia fremontii*), and Fremont gold (*Syntrichopappus fremontii*). Along Movie Road the showy scarlet milk-vetch (*Astragalus coccineus*) can be seen.

The southern part of [Death Valley National Park](#) is the only place in the park that shows much of a sign of spring bloom so far this season, but it is still early for Death Valley. Don't expect the eye-popping bloom as in 2005. This spring is more typical of what Death Valley offers: the miracle of a few delicate wildflowers in a

harsh and unforgiving landscape. Wildflowers in the area around Ashford Mill are at their peak this week. Desert gold (*Geraea canescens*) and sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*) are the primary stars, but a little searching will reveal desert five-spot (*Eremalche rotundifolia*) here and there. The bloom has spread to the alluvial fans just above Ashford Junction along Hwy 178. If you get out of your car and take a closer look, it is possible to find 20 different species of wildflowers in bloom. Bring your field guides and close-up lens to best appreciate the flowers here.

If you are heading back to the LA Basin from the low desert regions, you may want to detour a little south to Western Riverside County to seek out the chocolate lilies (*Fritilaria biflora*) at Harford Springs Wildlife Preserve. You will find the chocolate goodies along the southern part of the park just north of Ida Leona Road. Also blooming in that area are Fremont's star lily (*Zigadenus fremontii*) and purple sanicle (*Sanicula bipinnatifada*), baby blue eyes (*Nemophila menzeisii*) and goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.). Elsewhere in the park there are patches of white forget-me-not (*Cryptantha* sp.), California bells (*Phacelia minor*) and cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*). There are scattered California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), suncups (*Camissonia* sp.) and California bee plant (*Scrophularia californica*) among the rocky outcrops within the park.



California rock cress (*Arabis californica*) at RSABG, photo Michael Wall

Heading back west to Los Angeles, visit an urban garden at [Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden](#) in Claremont. Along their popular trails, many species of manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos* spp.) are still showing their blush pink blooms. Every shade of blue is represented in the flowers of ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp). Yellow island bush poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*) and splendid redbud trees (*Cercis occidentalis*) add to this vivid color display. Scattered about are stands of California rock cress (*Arabis sparsiflora*) and Munz's sage (*Salvia munzii*) showing blue and purple.

In the high desert at the [Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve](#), poppies are just starting up. Beacons of California poppy orange (*Eschscholzia californica*), are seen among the purple owl's clover (*Castilleja exserta*), cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*), goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) and evening snow (*Linanthus dichotomus*) along North Poppy Loop trail. The Tehachapi Vista Trail is a treat for both eyes and nose with grape soda lupine (*Lupinus excubitus*) splendid among the poppies.

The native garden section at [Descanso Gardens](#) has stunning California natives in bloom. Still showy are ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.) and tiny baby-blue eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*). Golden-yellow flannel bush (*Fremontodendron* spp.) and delicate tidy tips (*Layia glabrata*) are also very pretty right now.

This week the best wildflower viewing at [Placerita Canyon Natural Area](#) is along the Waterfall Trail. The 1.5 mile (roundtrip) trail begins at the Walker Ranch area and takes about an hour to complete. As you walk down the trail to the canyon bottom there is a large stand of golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) in full bloom. Further up the trail is a little patch of Indian pink (*Silene californica*) showing its bright red flowers between the wooden trail steps. As you enter the shaded oak woodland, the hillsides are covered with blooming California sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza brachypoda*). A little further up, the trail ends at the waterfall, which is flowing very nicely due to the recent rains.



Indian Pink (*Silene californica*) at Placerita Canyon, photo by Ron Kraus

As mentioned earlier, the areas north of LA are in "cool weather shock" and also may have road and trail closures. But if you are traveling and want to check out (call first!) the flowers, see last week's report (March 18) on the hotline website. Reporters have notified me that the bloom hasn't changed much this week.

Finally, we do want to add a nice site this week in the central coastal mountains. [Pacheco State Park](#) in Merced County has the beginnings of a fantastic spring bloom. Walk the trails and among the grassy slopes see a lovely display of fiddleneck (*Amsinckia* sp.), purple sanicle (*Sanicula bipinnatifada*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), checker bloom (*Sidalcea* sp.), shooting stars (*Dodecatheon* sp.) miner's lettuce (*Claytonia* sp.), blue dicks (*Dichelostema*

*capitatum*), red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*) and Johnny Tuck (*Triphysaria eriantha*).

California's wildflowers are indeed a precious legacy. To ensure that flowers return each year, remember to **stay on designated trails** and please **don't pick the flowers!**

That's it for this week. Look for our next report on **Friday, March 25<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**. Members receive a 15% discount on all plant purchases; 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](#).

### [Antelope Valley California Poppy Preserve](#)

- **Jane S. Pinheiro Interpretive Center is now open** from 10am - 4pm weekdays and 9am – 5pm weekends for the duration of the wildflower season. Free guided tours will be offered daily beginning March 12: 11 am on weekdays; 10 am and 2 pm on weekends.

### [Charmlee Wilderness Park](#)

- **Wildflower Hike** on Sunday, **April 10 at 10:00am**. Learn to recognize native plants. Meet at upper parking lot. **Reservations required:** 310-317-1364. \$4 parking fee. Duration: 2hrs.

### [Topanga State Park](#)

- **Springtime Splendor Stroll** on Sundays, **April 3, April 10 and April 17** starting at **1:00pm**. Join a docent naturalist in viewing emerging wildflowers and other signs of spring. Duration: 2hrs. For more information call the Topanga Canyon Docents at 310-455-1696.

### [Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa](#)

- **Wildflower Secrets**. Sunday, **March 27** starting at **9:30 am**. Join a park ranger on a easy-paced walk to see what's blooming. Meet at main parking lot. 2 hours.

### [Diamond Valley Lake](#)

- **Seasonal Wildflower Loop Trail**. This 1.3-mile loop trail extends from the Lakeview Trail and is rated as an easy-to-moderate hike, with some rugged terrain. Open from sunrise to sunset. Parking is \$7 and a \$2/person Lakeview Trail fee includes a map of the wildflower trail.

## **California Native Plant Society Chapters**

### [CNPS-Los Angeles/Santa Monica Chapter](#)

Field trips:

Sun., **March 27:** Malibu Bluffs Park. starting at **10:00am**. Bring hat, water, and snacks (boots are recommended). Duration: 2 hours. For more information and to **RSVP** call 310-472-0624

### [CNPS-San Diego Chapter](#)

Field trips:

- Sat., **March 26:** Cedar Ridge Public Plant Hike (**10:00am – noon**)
- [for more information](#)

### [CNPS-Channel Islands Chapter](#)

Native Plant Home Garden Tour. Saturday, April 16, 2011 9 am – 5 pm. Check website for more information.