



Wildflower Hotline

Every Weekend March through May

(818) 768-3533

Welcome to the **30th 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 a report for **March 2, 2012**. New reports will be posted each Friday through the end of May.

Winter has provided the land with lower than normal rainfall. Although there are good wildflowers out there, the hotspots may be more difficult to find, and plants harder to see. But nature always surprises us, so let's get out and see what is blooming!

We'll start this week in Palos Verdes at the jewel of the Peninsula, [South Coast Botanic Garden](#). This is a very special garden to visit in the early spring. Most California natives are in the Mediterranean Garden. Look for blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), Canterbury bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), seaside daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*), succulent lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*) and hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathaceae*) in full bloom. Go for the natives. Stay for the other fabulous blooming plants from all over the world.

Heading south along the California coast, be sure to visit the [Environmental Nature Center](#) in Newport Beach. The trails that wind through the plant communities are a riot of yellow with blooming bush poppy (*Dendromecon rigida*), flannel bush (*Fremontodendron mexicanum*) and California coast brittlebush (*Encelia californica*).

Flannel Bush, ENC by 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*). At ground level are patches of sand verbena (*Abronia* spp.) and fringed ground pink (*Linanthus dianthiflorus*) forming a quilt of pinkish hues. Some trails in the reserve are closed or being repaired. Please check the website or drop in at the Visitor Center for more information about the trails.

Heading east from the coast to the inland valleys, through the shrub and woodlands of the Cleveland National Forest – destination Anza Borrego - you will be treated to a mosaic of lush greens and grays of chaparral covered slopes. I'll send you off on trails to explore this area in the next few weeks when the chaparral pops 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 to the famous vernal pools. Blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum* ssp. *capitatum*) and checkerbloom (*Sidalcea malviflora* ssp. *sparsifolia*) are poking up along the grassy slopes. Yellow carpet (*Blennosperma nanum* var. *nanum*) can be seen near the Vernal Pools. Along the pathways on wooded trails are Johnny jump-up (*Viola pedunculata*), western buttercup (*Ranunculus occidentalis*), miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata* ssp. *mexicana*), baby-blue-eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*) and milk maids (*Cardamine californica* var. *californica*). California peony (*Paeonia californica*) is tucked under the chaparral shrubs. Be sure to look for their maroon-colored blossoms. But it is the stately Engelmann oaks (*Quercus engelmannii*) that are most photo-worthy.

Entering [Anza-Borrego Desert State Park](#), from the west and descending into San Felipe Valley along SR2, intrepid wildflower reporters found almost 50 species of flowering plants in three stops— Blair Valley, Smuggler Canyon Wash, and milepost 41. The blooms of annual wildflowers are small and scattered, so you need to get out and walk around to find them. Lack of sustaining rains after they germinated in the winter has kept these plants diminutive. Notable exceptions to the “small” theme are the large and showy shrubs that have popped into full bloom in many places. They include desert brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), creosote (*Larrea tridentata*), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*) and desert lavender (*Hyptis emoryi*). There are good patches of Bigelow's monkeyflower (*Mimulus bigelovii*), and ghost flower (*Mohavea confertiflora*) in a few stretches that casual tourists will notice from the road. Scattered stands of the bright yellow small-flowered poppy and desert dandelion can be seen all along the roadside in the park.



Desert dandelion, Anza Borrego Desert State Park

Continuing northeast, check out the bloom of early perennials as you enter [Joshua Tree National Park](#) at the southern entrance. The southern Cottonwood area of the park is still the best place for wildflower seekers and Mastodon Peak, a three-mile moderate loop, starting from Cottonwood Spring is recommended for “flower hikers.” You can’t help but get warmed on these still-chilly spring days by looking at the riotous yellow bladderpod (*Isomeris arborea*), and orange-red chuparosa (*Justicia californica*). Brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), desert forget-me-not (*Cryptantha angustifolia*), and sand blazing star (*Mentzelia involucrata*) are good in this area as well. Watch for and follow your nose to the desert star vine (*Brandegea bigelovii*) clambering over the shrubs in the washes. Further into the Park, the stately Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) are flowering at Black Rock, along the western part of Park Boulevard, and at Keys View.

If you are out on a Sunday drive in the desert east of Joshua Tree, check out what is blooming along the roadsides and washes north of Desert Center along Hwy 177. Wildflowers include desert sunflower (*Geraea canescens*), creosote (*Larrea tridentata*), desert sand verbena (*Abronia villosa* var. *villosa*), some lupines (*Lupinus* spp.), desert brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), and Fremont’s pincushion (*Chaenactis fremontii*).

Heading back toward Los Angeles, check out [Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden](#) in Claremont. Showy and fragrant shrubs along trails throughout the garden include California wild lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.), barberry (*Berberis* spp.), island bush poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*), gooseberries and currants (*Ribes* spp.) and sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*). This garden is an excellent birding spot as well.

Back to the coast and nestled in the [Santa Monica Mountains](#), you will find many trails and much to see. Check ahead on trail conditions before starting out as some may have erosion damage from winter rain. Because of the dry winter, flowers have been slow to come on these mountain trails, but the slopes are greening up and some of the ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.) are starting to bloom and have wild cucumber climbing up over their canopies. Larkspurs (*Delphinium* spp.), wishbone plant (*Mirabilis californica*) and chaparral currant (*Ribes malvaceum*) have been spotted on the trails of Zuma and Trancas Canyons. Lots

of blooming caterpillar phacelia (*Phacelia cicutaria*) has been seen lining the New Milenium trail in Calabasa

That's it for this week. Look for our next report on **Friday, March 9th** 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 by Wednesday of each week when blooms of note occur.

NATIVE PLANT & WILDFLOWER EVENTS:

Theodore Payne Foundation

Annual Poppy Day on Saturday, **March 31st, 8:30am 4:30 pm** featuring a native plant sale. Members receive a 15% discount on plant purchases (general public receives a 10% discount).

9th Annual Native Plant Garden Tour, Saturday and Sunday, **April 14 & 15** from 10 am – 5 pm. Earlybird tickets through March 24th: \$20/person for two days. After March 24th, \$25/person. For more information visit our [webpage](#).

California Native Plant Society Chapters

[CNPS-San Diego Chapter](#)

Field trips: **March 4 - Plant Walk - Tecolote Nature Center**
9:00am to 12:00pm [For more information](#)

March 11 - Plant Walk - San Miguel Mountain - San Diego National Wildlife Refuge 9:00am to 11:00pm [More information](#)

[CNPS – Los Angeles-Santa Monica Mountains](#)

Field trip: SAT 3/17 8:30am Caballero Canyon, Chaparral Chatter Nature Walk. Leisurely pace, but steep hiking on narrow trail in one section. Meet at lower trailhead on Reseda Blvd. 1.9 miles south of Ventura Blvd. Bring water, snack, hat; boots recommended. Info: 818-782-9346. 3hrs