Theodore Payne Foundation, a non-profit plant nursery, seed source, book store, and education center dedicated to the preservation of wild flowers and California native plants. This report is for March 6, 2015. New reports will be posted each Friday through the end of May.

Again this year, we are at below normal rainfall and time is running out for significant rain events. Snow in the high elevations and high desert regions may contribute to a nice bloom, but not until later in the spring. The drought makes seeking out wild flower beauties more challenging but a lot more fun for Southern Californians to get out there and cheer every flower sighting!

Most of the reports this week are out of the desert regions as they have been experiencing an early spring.

This is not a banner year in Death Valley National Park, but it is still lovely. The southern part of Badwater Road, is a good spot to enjoy vast carpets of sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*). Not only a feast for the eyes, the sand verbena is also one of the most fragrant plants in Death Valley. The extremely hot weather earlier this month did do some damage to early blooming species, but recent small rain episodes may save the wild flower season, especially in the higher elevations. Scotty’s Castle Road is looking good, with some brown eyed evening primrose (*Chylismia claaviformis*), and really nice patches of notch-leaf phacelia (*Phacelia crenulata*), golden evening primrose (*Chylismia brevipes*), and brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*). Further south on the Badwater Road, the areas between Mile Marker 40 and 48 there are delightful displays of desert sunflower (*Geraea canescens*) along with the sand verbena. On the west side of the park, near Panamint Springs and Father Crowley lookout, there are some nice brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*) sightings. It is pre-peak bloom in the Jubilee Pass area, but if you do stop and walk around look for great desert five spot (*Eremalche rotundifolia*). Walking up the alluvial fans in that area will reward you with some really beautiful patches of mohavea (*Mohavea confertiflora*), calthaleaf phacelia (*Phacelia calthifolia*), and shredding evening primrose (*Camissonia boothii*). The very fun gravel ghost (*Atrichoseris platyphylla*), broad leaved gilia (*Gilia latifolia*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), and Death Valley sandpaper plant (*Petalonyx thruberi*), will be blooming soon if not this week.
The extent and timing of spring wild flower blooms in Joshua Tree National Park vary from one year to the next. Most importantly, fall and winter precipitation and warm (not hot!) spring temperatures are key environmental factors affecting the spring blooming period. The Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glauca*) are flowering on the Barker Dam Trail and are quite stunning now with pure white urn-shaped flowers against the dark red bark. Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) are budding and blooming around Keys View and Black Rock Campgrounds. Annual flowers on Black Rock’s Westside Loop Trail include: desert parsley (*Lomatium mohavense*), tidy-tips (*Layia glandulosa*), forget-me-nots (*Cryptantha sp.*), checker fiddleneck (*Amsinckia tessellata*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), and pale primrose.
(Camissoniopsis pallida). Chuparosa (Justicia californica) and cheerful yellow blooming bladderpod (Peritoma arborea) are found along with less common bush peppergrass (Lepidium fremontii), desert rock-pea (Lotus rigidus), and globe-mallow (Sphaeralcea ambigua). Along Pinto Basin Road the Ocotillos (Fouquieria splendens) are green with leaves, but their red-torch-tip blossoms are still hard to find. It’s early for Ocotillo, but Creosote (Larrea tridentata), and Desert Lavender (Hyptis emoryi) are attractive, fragrant and showy now. The nicest display in Wilson Canyon is bladderpod (Peritoma arborea). The pollen and nectar feeders are grateful for their reliability. Other plants starting to show their flowers are brittlebush (Encelia farinosa), thick-Leaf ground-cherry (Physalis crassifolia), desert globe-mallow (Sphaeralcea ambigua), starvine (Brandegea bigelovii). In Porcupine Wash look for Emory’s rock-daisy (Perityle emoryi), Parish’s goldeneye (Bahiopsis parishii), and Canterbury bells (Phacelia campanularia).

Driving down the Montezuma Grade (below 3,000 ft) into Anza Borrego Desert State Park you might see a few patches of color. It is always best to pull over safely and get out to look around. Please don’t Drive and Botanize! Here is what you may encounter: Fremont’s pincushion (Chaenactis fremontii), brown-eyed primrose (Chylismia claviformis ssp. peirsonii), forget-me-not (Cryptantha angustifolia), encelia (Encelia farinosa), desert sunflower (Geraea canescens), creosote (Larrea tridentata), dwarf cottonrose (Logfia depressa), Arizona lupine (Lupinus arizonicus), desert dandelion (Malacothrix glabrata), little golden poppy (Eschscholzia minutilflora), dune evening primrose (Oenothera deltoides ssp. deltoides), and the stately elegant desert lily (Hesperocallis undulata). I’ve been told that the floor of Anza around the visitor center was carpeted with flowers, especially primroses, just a couple of weeks ago, but the sphinx moth caterpillars chomped it all down to nothing! Nada! No more flowers! Talk about hungry caterpillars.

Early March in Malibu with giant coreopsis! Another beautiful day in La La Land. Some beautiful wild flowers are to be seen along the Sunset Hills Trail in the Sunset Hills Open Space in the Santa Monica Mountains. The ever reliable popcorn flowers and forget-me-nots (Plagiobothrys spp, Cryptantha spp.), along with the bright California poppies (Eschscholzia californica) and shooting stars (Dodecatheon clevelandii). Stop to enjoy these beauties along with the stunning views of the Santa Monicas. The New Millennium Trail in Las Virgenes View Park has blossomed in mass with the recent rain and warm temperatures. Look for, or follow your nose to the colorful and fragrant patches of lupines (Lupinus spp.), and neon red maids (Calandrinia ciliata). About a mile and half up the trail there are tons of caterpillar phacelia (Phacelia cicutaria) and California poppies (Eschscholzia calafornica) near the top of the ridge. The Los Robles Trail/East in the Site Hope Nature Preserve has several colorful favorites in bloom. The trail head is at the south end of Moorpark Road (where the road ends). So enjoy the mix of lovely annuals and perennials like popcorn flower (Cryptantha and Plagiobothrys spp), fiddlenecks (Amsinckia sp.), purple nightshade (Solanum
It’s wildflower season once again!!! The winter rains have refreshed the Habitat Gardens here at Elizabeth Learning Center! The vernal pools are ensconced in ribbons of yellow-ray goldfields (Lasthenia sp.), owl’s clover (Castilleja sp.), miniature lupine (Lupinus sp.) and narrow-leaved fringe pod (Thysothamnus sp.). Many vernal pool endemics are producing blooms in the basins: Prostrate navarratia (Navarratia sp.), California orcutt grass (Orcuttia sp.), Hoover’s Calicoflower (Downingia bella), Otay Mesa mint (Pogogyne nudiscula), thread-leaf brodiaea (Brodiaea orcuttia), and Douglas’ meadowfoam (Limnanthes douglasii). Flowering outside the pools are Arroyo Lupine (Lupinus succulentus), fiddleneck (Amsinckia sp.), California Poppy (Eschscholzia californica), chia (Salvia columbariae), Deerweed (Acmispon glabra), Mojave tarplant (Deinandra mojavensis) and wart-stemmed Ceanothus (Ceanothus sp.).and
That's it for this week. Look for our next report on Friday, March 13th 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

Poppy Days Plant Sale

*Friday & Saturday, March 27 and 28, 8:30am-4:30pm*

An annual celebration of our State flower and huge native plant sale, offering the region’s largest and most interesting selection of California native plants – with expert advice and discounts to all!

TPF members 15% off all day; non-members 10% off after 11:00 am; memberships available at the door.

2015 Annual Theodore Payne Native Plant Garden Tour

*Saturday & Sunday, March 21 & 22, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*

Full details at NativePlantGardenTour.org
Tickets On Sale Now