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 a report for March 4, 2016. New reports will be posted each Friday through the end of May.

The El Niño turned out to be a big tease for Southern California flower viewers. Now everyone is hoping for a “March Miracle.” Whatever, we will keep seeking out the ephemeral beauties of our State’s flora.

Let me just start with Carrizo Plain National Monument since that is what everyone has been asking about! Sadly, not a good bloom season yet (It still may happen—fingers crossed). Reports of good patches of goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) and hillside daisy (*Monolopia* sp.) in the north end of the monument. As in most cases, if you stop and get out of the car, you can usually find a few more rare jewels among the masses of flowers. Searching for them is all part of the adventure.

Nearby, I’ve been told that Gorman is ready to pop with poppies and lupines. If you see color in the pass area, check it out. Just don’t forget to get off the freeway safely first!

Most of the reports this week are out of the desert regions as they have been experiencing hoards of visiting “posy peepers”.

This year Death Valley National Park, is lovely. This desert park got more rainfall this winter than Joshua Tree or Anza Borrego (We are so lucky to have such a diversity of desert regions!). So this is the time to go there. Do it now! In fact because of the elevation differences within the park two trips, one trip now and another later would be ideal. The bloom is mostly still at lower elevations but definitely moving north and higher in altitude. Expansive fields of desert sunflower (*Geraea canescens*) can be seen along the Badwater Road. Carpets of sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*) occur from Mile Marker 42 to the end of the road, many of the other flowers in this area are past their peak. This week Highway 190 is very colorful with bright yellow golden evening primrose (*Chylismia brevipes*) and purple notch-leaf phacelia (*Phacelia crenulata*) from Furnace Creek to the East Park Entrance. There are large patches of purple mat (*Nama demissum*) in some sections. The ethereal, floating blossoms of gravel ghost (*Atrichoseris platyphylla*) are growing thick in this area as well. Northwest of the Visitor Center, you will find the expansive fields of desert sunflower that Death Valley is famous for. All along the road, get out and look closer for more variety. A nice little loop drive is to go up the Beatty Cutoff Road and down Mud Canyon, then back to Furnace Creek along Highway 190. Mud Canyon is looking fantastic, but the flowers are growing so thick there that there is nowhere to pull over. Use the wide shoulders on the Beatty...
Cutoff and wander a wash to look for variety. You will find phacelia, golden evening primrose (*Chylismia brevipes*), ghost flower (*Mohavea breviflora*), Acton’s encelia (*Encelia actonii*), and broad-flowered gilia (*Gilia latiflora*) on Scotty’s Castle Road. Although there are a few flowers on the approaches to Towne Pass and in the Panamint Valley, those areas are not yet worth a special trip.

**If you have a high clearance vehicle**, do a little botanizing in the mid-elevations of the Greenwater Valley to increase your species count. There are not a lot of flowers blooming here yet, but there are a lot of different species, flowers you will not find in the lower elevations. **Best backcountry dirt road drives** this week would be the Hole in the Wall Road and Echo Canyon Road. Color and diversity in both these places is fantastic. Titus Canyon has some paintbrush (*Castilleja angustifolia*) and lupine (*Lupinus sp.*) in the mid-elevations, and flowers are blooming in the lower reaches of the canyon, but it will still be a few weeks before the bloom really gets going here. For hikers, Fall Canyon and Monarch Canyon are good bets. For true, blue botanists, I will recommend a reading of this website [http://tchester.org/dv/plants/reports/2016.html](http://tchester.org/dv/plants/reports/2016.html) by Tom Chester. He explains with great joy the botanical jewels of Death Valley like the one pictured below.

*Mimulus rupicola*, rock midget, a Death Valley endemic growing in a crack on a limestone cliff in Echo Canyon; photo by Tom Chester
Joshua Tree National Park did not receive as much rain as its neighbor desert park to the north, Death Valley NP. Again, with the variety of geography and habitats in Joshua Tree, more than one visit is necessary to see all the seasonal blooms. The southern entrance and surrounding bajadas are best for flower viewing right now along with the Pinto Basin region. The globes of Chuparosa (Justicia californica) shrubs are on fire with red flowers, and cheerful yellow blooming bladderpod (Peritoma arborea) contrasts it nicely. Can’t miss the brittlebush (Encelia farinosa) and the Ocotillo (Fouquieria splendens) blooming yellow and red too. The annuals blooming beneath them include Canterbury bells (Phacelia campanularia), forget-me-nots (Cryptantha spp.), Parish’s poppy (Eschscholzia parishii), desert dandelion (Malacothrix glabrata) and brown-eyed primrose (Chylismia claviformis ssp. peirsonii). Along Pinto Basin Road, creosote (Larrea tridentata) is blooming quite nicely along with desert lavender (Condea emoryi). Stand out wildflowers here are the yellow cups (Chylismia brevipes) and notch-leaf phacelia (Phacelia crenulata).

Joshua Tree will continue to bloom throughout the park through June, so take a trip out as often as possible. Just south of Cottonwood across the I-10 on the road to Mecca, you travel through an area called Box Canyon with little side canyons for short hikes. Along the edges of washes, you can find many lovely species of wildflowers. This makes a nice day trip. From Mecca, you can hook back up with the I-10 in Indio to return home.
This year's bloom in the Anza Borrego Desert State Park might have been spectacular had the glorious El Niño year we were promised actually happened! As it turns out, the annual plants that germinated in response to the nice January rain, ended up going to bloom quickly during the rainless February when they were still small. Some flowers may persist and improve, especially if the area gets some additional rain.

As is often the case however, the perennials and shrubs look happy with the rainfall they got, even though it was below normal. If additional rain occurs soon, this area may be worth a second visit.

This week's ABDSP list was compiled from a drive down Montezuma Grade (S22), and from three areas on the desert floor—along Henderson Canyon Road, the end of the pavement on Di Giorgio Road and around Borrego Springs.

The showy perennials along S22 include short-winged deerweed (Acmispon glaber var. brevialatus), brittlebush (Encelia farinosa), desert lavender (Condea emoryi), chuparosa (Justicia californica), and creosote (Larrea tridentata).

Quite abundant along the desert floor locations are desert sand verbena (Abronia villosa), brown-eyed primrose (Chylismia claviformis ssp. peirsonii), California spectacle pod (Dithyrea californica) and Arizona lupine (Lupinus arizonicus). Common, scattered pockets of species in the same location include California evening-primrose (Eulobus californica), Palmer's crinklemat (Tiquilia palmeri), Emory's rock-daisy (Perityle emoryi) and less common, the dune evening primrose (Oenothera deltoides). One annual that seems to have done very well in spite of the weird rainfall pattern is desert lily (Hesperocallis undulata). In fact, this plant is reportedly doing very well in all desert regions of California.
Spring has arrived in Topanga Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains. There are a lot of wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*) flowers and even some soft young cucumbers. Fun to see this odd fruit. The ever reliable popcorn flowers and forget-me-nots (*Plagiobothrys* spp, *Cryptantha* spp.) are scattered around. As you turn to walk out on the chaparral loop portion of the nature trail there is an impressive chaparral current (*Ribes malvaceum*) along with green bark ceanothus (*Ceanothus spinosus*), and some bush sunflowers (*Encelia californica*). Look for the purple nightshade (*Solanum* sp.) on the Nature Trail too. NPS staff have reported that the shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*) are out on the Mishe Mokwa Trail at CXR.

At Placerita Canyon Nature Center, spring seems to be coming along slowly even with the warm temperatures. The Canyon Trail is full of singing birds ushering in the season. There are a few (many more to come) wild flowers to see. The hoary ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*) is showing their white blossoms and the hairy ceanothus (*Ceanothus oliganthus*) is ready to show their lavender blooms soon. The wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*) is taking over the trail as the vines tangle across their neighbors showing their white star-shaped flowers. The brilliant yellow flowers of the golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) are in full bloom, and the sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*) is covered with their rosy buds. Don't miss the catkins of the arroyo willow (*Salix* sp.) along the creek.

Along the Southern California coast In Newport Beach, the Environmental Nature Center is an oasis of serenity in a bustling beach community. Go there to walk the trails among beautiful native plants now in full bloom. Always cheery in their California-beckoning colors of gold and blue are California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), California encelia (*Encelia californica*), and California wild lilac (*Ceanothus* spp.) Also in bright bloom are bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*) and
flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum*). In contrast to all that blue and gold are the pink Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), Chaparral mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*) and the red of monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus* var. *puniceus*). A couple of other notable species in flower, and probably being visited heavily by hummingbirds, is the Nevin’s Barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) and the Fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (*Ribes speciosa*).

This is the ten-year anniversary of the establishment of Elizabeth Learning Center Habitat Gardens in the city of Cudahy! Celebrate by visiting their Desert Garden flush with the colors of desert bluebells (*Phacelia campanularia*), cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*), mojave sun cups (*Camissonia campestris*), devil’s spine-flower (*Chorizante rigida*), mojave lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*), coyote’s pygmy poppy (*Eschscholzia minutiflora*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), spanish needle (*Palafaxia arida*), pebble pincushion (*Chaenactis carphoclinia*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), desert lavender (*Hyptis emoryi*), desert holly (*Atriplex hymenelytra*), desert candle (*Caulanthus inflatus*), owls clover (*Castilleja exserta*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), panamint cryptantha (*Cryptantha inaequata*), skeleton milkweed (*Asclepias subulata*), desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), fishhook cactus (*Mammillaria dioica*), sweetbush (*Bebbia juncea*), fiveneedle pricklyleaf (*Thymophylla pentachaeta*), red and yellow flowering chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), devil’s lettuce (*Amsinckia tessellate*) and brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*).

In the Vernal Pools Garden, the dry shallow pools are filling up with prostrate navarratia (*Navarretia prostrata*), woolly marbles (*Psilocarphus brevissimus*), otay mesa mint (*Pogogyne nudiuscula*), thread-leaf brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*), dense-flowered spike primrose (*Epilobium densiflorum*), vernal popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys undulatus*), bolander’s water-starwort (*Callitriche heterophylla* var. *bolanderi*), sanford’s arrowhead (*Sagittaria sanfordii* & douglas’ meadowfoam (*Limnanthes douglasii*). There are also spade-foot toad tadpoles and riverside fairy shrimp swimming about in the deepest pools!!! As always happens as the water recedes, rings of yellow-rayed goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*) hang about the edges like a botanical necklace. Many other perennial species are blooming in their Chaparral Garden inside the school and are well worth a see such as island bush-poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*) and blue palo verde (*Parkinsonia florida*). These unique school gardens are located at Elizabeth Learning Center on Elizabeth Street in Cudahy between Atlantic Ave and Wilcox Ave. They are open to the public during school hours by checking in at the Main Office and acquiring a visitor’s pass.
That's it for this week. Look for our next report on Friday, March 11\textsuperscript{th} 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, April 15 and 16, 8:30 am-4:30 pm*

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.

2015 Annual Theodore Payne Native Plant Garden Tour

*Saturday & Sunday, April 2 & 3, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm*

Full details at NativePlantGardenTour.org

Tickets On Sale Now

California Native Plant Society Hikes & Events

Riverside-San Bernardino Chapter

Sunday, March 13, 2016 - Mission Creek Preserve and Whitewater Preserve, The Wildlands Conservancy - Katie Barrows leads this CNPS RSB Chapter trip into the 4760 acre Mission Creek Preserve at the transition zone between the Sonoran and Mojave deserts, with a rich diversity of flora and fauna representing both deserts. Go to chapter link for more information.

Orange County Chapter

Lecture/workshop: Butterflies in your Landscape: Creating a Complete Butterfly Garden. Speaker: Gordon Pratt. **Thursday, March 17, 2016.** Doors open 7:00 pm, meeting starts 7:30 pm. No fee or RSVP/ Welcome to all! The meeting place is the Duck Club building at the San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary in Irvine. Go to chapter link for more information.

Placerita Canyon Nature Center

Saturdays at 11:00 for the Family Hike; 1:00 for the Animal Show.