May 15, 2020

Theodore Payne Foundation’s Wild Flower Hotline is made possible by donations, memberships and sponsors. You can support TPF by shopping the online gift store as well. A new, pay by phone, contactless plant pickup system is now available. Details here.

SOME TRAILS throughout Southern California are once again accessible. This however may vary regionally, so it is strongly advised to check websites for national, state, county and city parks before visiting. Always practice social distancing on trails.

Two popular LA County parks, Placerita Canyon and Devil’s Punchbowl have officially opened their trails to the public! At trailheads, parking lots and on trails, visitors are asked to wear masks and practice social distancing. Visitor Centers are closed still. Check trails.lacounty.gov for more information.

The Devil’s Punchbowl at 4700 ft. on the north slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains is known for its amazing geology and spectacular desert views. Now add to that a colorful spring bloom filling the openings between boulders and coloring gravely patches. Along the road approaching the Park, look for California flannel bush (Fremontodendron californicum) greeting visitors by displaying their large golden flowers. Next to the trails are colorful combinations of red, yellow and gold from golden yarrow (Eriophyllum confertiflorum), narrowleaf golden bush (Ericameria linearifolia), Western wallflower (Erysimum capitatum), scarlet bugler (Penstemon centranthifolius), and Bigelow’s monkeyflower (Diplacus bigelovii). Providing little surprises of contrasting colors are pink, and white Mojave linanthus (Leptosiphon breviculus) and bright blue chia (Salvia columbariae).
At Placerita Canyon, the Ecology Trail displays the most popular blooming plants. Chaparral shrubs—chamise (Adenostoma fasciculata), sugar bush (Rhus ovata), black sage (Salvia mellifera), California buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum), hoary ceanothus (Ceanothus oliganthus), heart-leaved penstemon (Keckiella cordifolia), Yerba Santa (Eriodictyon sp.) and yucca (Hesperoyucca whipplei) are sporting their late spring colors. Finding homes among these dominant plants, live the smaller familiar perennials like deerweed (Acmispon glaber), woolly blue curls (Trichostema lanatum), sticky leaf monkey flower (Diplacus aurantiacus), purple nightshade (Solanum sp.) and southern honeysuckle (Lonicera subspicata). Seeking out some sun among its taller neighbors are caterpillar phacelia (Phacelia cicutaria), popcorn flowers (Cryptantha sp.), wine cup clarkia (Clarkia purpurea), golden yarrow (Eriophyllum confertiflorum), yellow pincushion (Chaenactis glabriuscula), goldfields (Lasthenia sp.), scarlet bugler (Penstemon centranthifolius) and cobweb thistles (Cirsium occidentale). The color display of these blooming plants should not be missed.

Caspers Wilderness Park in Orange County is full of lovely flowers. There is a super bloom of yellow pincushion (Chaenactis glabriuscula) in many of the creek beds and upper banks, including near the entrance. The Bell Canyon trail is lined with wine cup clarkias (Clarkia purpurea). On the ridges, the deerweed (Acmispon glabra) is blooming profusely. The sage sisters, black sage (Salvia mellifera) and white sage (Salvia apiana) are in their flowering prime, and the buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum) is starting what should be a big, showy display. Lots of small pretties like the many-stemmed dudleya (Dudleya multicaulis) on East Ridge, golden stars (Bloomeria crocea) on Cougar Pass and chaparral morning glory (Calystegia macrostegia) rambling up, down and around everywhere. One favorite, the monkey flowers (Diplacus aurantiacus) are blooming everywhere and having another special year. The best place to see them place to see them is on Cougar Pass. Caspers Park is closed to parking. The best way to get into the park is to get a ride to the
entrance, and get a pick up later. There are miles of trails or ramble closer to the entrance. Goes without saying, take safety precautions as there are other hikers, bikers or staff.

The southern Sierra hillsides are lit up with yellow madia (Madia elegans) and pink speckled clarkia (Clarkia cylindrica subsp. clavicarpa). The bloom along Hwy 198 is pretty intense in a few spots and wonderfully gaudy. Spring woodland species are in bloom everywhere having taken advantage of the layering episodes of spring rain. Bulb plants like Ithuriel’s spear (Triteleia laxa), pretty face (Triteleia ixioides) and the local Munz’s (Iris munzii) are among those rain lovers. There are colonies of white yarrow (Achillea millefolium) in the Case Mountain watershed and more widely, the yellow rock bush monkey flower (Diplacus calycinus). The uncommon purple milkweed (Asclepias cordifolia) is having a good year as well. Foothill residents are also looking forward to the big bloom of California buckeye (Aesculus californica), bringing an explosion of color and amazing fragrance. The buckeye’s habitat associates, chaparral buckthorn (Ceanothus leucodermis) and California Yerba Santa (Eriodictyon californica) are also very showy.
Lastly, a story of renewal. The photos below show Lower May Valley Road area in the San Jacinto Mountains, a bit west of Keen Camp Summit on SR74. This area burned in 2018 in the Cranston Fire. The post fire bloom in 2019 was good; now spectacular AGAIN this spring with pretty fire-flowers! The yellow is golden rayed pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta aurea*). The pink-purple is volcanic gilia (*Gilia ochroleuca ssp. exilis*) and the white is common cryptantha (*Cryptantha intermedia*). There were flowers all along May Valley Road, and some equally good displays in other parts. Notable, alongside of the road are many, many striking showy penstemon (*Penstemon spectabilis*).
The Habitat Gardens at Elizabeth Learning Center continue to POP in May. Most of the wildflowers can be seen from Elizabeth Street in front of the campus. Explore the Desert Habitat Garden to find creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), Mojave sage (*Salvia mohavensis*), elephant tree (*Bursera microphylla*), climbing snapdragon (*Maurandella antirrhiniflora*), desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), Spanish needle (*Palafoxia arida*), fish hook cactus (*Mammillaria dioica*), beavertail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris*), brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), blue bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), bird’s eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*), and owl’s clover (*Castilleja exserta*). The Vernal Pool Habitat Garden has Douglas’ meadowfoam (*Limnanthes douglasii*), San Diego mesa mint (*Pogogyne abramsii*), San Diego ceanothus (*Ceanothus cyaneus*), cliff spurge (*Euphorbia misera*), Otay Mountain lotus (*Hosackia crassifolia*), globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), California sage (*Salvia californica*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), and a beautiful blanket of goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*). Some additional species in the Chaparral Habitat Garden include woolly Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja folioloosa*), California wild rose (*Rosa californica*), Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), pink fairy duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*), torhleaf goldeneye (*Viguiera laciniata*), Santa Cruz Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum*).
arborescens), Channel Island tree poppy (Dendromecon harfordii) and Matilija poppy (Romneya coulteri), Elizabeth Learning Center is located off Elizabeth Street between Atlantic and Wilcox Avenues in Cudahy.

Elizabeth Learning Center Habitat Gardens. San Diego ceanothus (Ceanothus cyaneus), Matilija poppy (Romneya coulteri), California wild rose (Rosa californica), Mojave sage (Salvia mohavensis).

Photos by George Nanoski

That’s it for this week. Look for our next report on Friday, May 22nd and check back each week for the most up to date information on southland central California wildflowers.

Below is a short list of web links for local parks for access information and current conditions.

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. 
Santa Monica Mountains. 
Antelope Valley State Poppy Reserve. 
Joshua Tree National Park
Carrizo Plain National Monument
Death Valley National Park

NATIVE PLANT AND WILD FLOWER EVENTS

THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION For the sake of public health and safety, Theodore Payne Foundation is temporarily closed to the public. A new, pay by phone, contactless plant pickup system is now available. A silver lining to this crisis is that you'll be able to put extra time into your garden, and plants will be available for pickup. Details here.

TPF POPPY HOUR - FRIDAYS, 5:30-6:30 PST
Join the online community as Theodore Payne Foundation hosts a one-hour celebration of California native plants via either Zoom or Youtube.

Episode 6, May 15: This Friday, the program begins with Jeff Maloney in his garden. Jeff is Chief Staff Council for Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Councilmember for District 3 in Alhambra. The second half of the show is dedicated to a discussion of the important issue of equity in the environmental movement, with Marcos Trinidad, Director of Audubon Center at Debs Park.