



March 1, 2019

We expect an excellent wild flower season after all the winter rainfall. Getting access to some of our favorite viewing sites may present challenges however. Trails, roads and some highways are closed due to water erosion, rock slides and subsequent damage. For example, see Malibu Creek State Park report below. Please check road and trail conditions by phone or websites before you travel. Also, please take care not to wander into private property, closed public roads or trample wild flowers. It's a little too early and too cool for some popular places to have a diversity of flowers blooming yet, but other sites welcome visitors with bountiful displays of flowers.

Within the [Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area](#), [Malibu Creek State Park](#) is again open to the public. The Woolsey Fire came through but most of the landscape is now green, albeit with non-native grasses and punctuated with big oak trees that are mostly blackened or scorched. Most of these hardy oaks will survive however. There are very few flowers; some wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*), a few patches of California poppy (*Escholtzia californica*) and a few wild hyacinth (*Dichelostemma capitatum*). All of these are hardy fire-followers. The dramatic panoramas and the reassurance that the land is healing makes up for the lack of flowers. The flowers will probably come next in a few weeks. The Musch Trail at [Topanga State Park](#) wanders its way uphill. There you can make a loop by returning on the fire road. This is about 3 miles. The Woolsey Fire did not reach Topanga State Park so this is a place where you can just enjoy our coastal chaparral. The big pod ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpa*) are in bloom, making the mountainsides look as though they are dusted in snow. There is a faint scent of honey everywhere. There are a few other flowers in bloom—wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*), Eastwood Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa*), chaparral current (*Ribes malvaceum*), and purple nightshade (*Solanum xanti*), but this hike is all about the ceanothus.



**Big pod ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpa*). Photos by Dorothy Steinicke**

It's too soon for the showy wild flowers to make an appearance at [Placerita Canyon Nature Center](#), but it's the perfect time to appreciate the early blooming perennials. The chaparral currant (*Ribes malvaceum*) and golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) are attracting many hummingbirds. Hoary ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*), and big berry manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glauca*) are very showy as well. The California Peony (*Paeonia californica*) is in bud, ready to burst and those deep burgundy flowers just can't be missed. It's a good time to check out the bright golden orange jack o' lantern mushrooms (*Omphalotus olearius*) too. Revel in these special species while you can. The wild flowers will surely come later.

A report from the [Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve](#) tells us that with all the rain, there will be a slow start on the poppies (*Eschscholtzia californica*) but the anticipation is breathtaking. A little warm weather will wake them up. At the neighboring [Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park](#), it is the time of the year when the Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) form arm-fulls of flower buds which will bring their large white blossoms soon. Ripley is a wonderful place to see the Joshua trees in their native woodland setting. Furthermore, the juniper trees (*Juniperus californica*) are dressed with blue-gray, berry-like cones. Don't forget to enjoy the gorgeous panoramic scene of snow on the Tehachapi Mountains in the distance.

[Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Park](#) in Orange County is beckoning early flower chasers. There are large swathes of California poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*) on the hillsides and Padre's shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*), ground pinks (*Linanthus dianthiflorus*), San Diego jewel-flower (*Caulanthus heterophyllus*) and wild hyacinth (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), are poking up through the grasses. Brilliant blue wild Canterbury bells (*Phacelia minor*), orange-red Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja affinis* sp.), red maids (*Calandrinia menziesii*), California wood sorrel (*Oxalis californica*), wishbone bush (*Mirabilis laevis*), and California peony (*Paeonia californica*) are just begging to have their pictures taken. Virgin's bower (*Clematis pauciflora*), is climbing all over shrubs and trees looking very "bridal" in this refuge of coastal sage scrub habitat. Hikes of 1-4 miles required to see most flowers. Some trails at Caspers are closed due to storm damage, so do check.



**Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Park. Photo by Laura Camp**

The best place to get your senses back in shape after being winter dormant is a visit to [Anza Borrego Desert State Park](#). Many places in the Borrego Valley are excellent flower viewing sites for both the novice and the experienced flower viewer. For those who do not have much time and need to stay on paved roads, try Di Giorgio Rd. just north of Borrego Springs. A “mini super bloom” is at the end of the paved Di Giorgio Road at the entrance to Coyote Canyon. It is best to park here and walk a short distance up the track for the best displays. The air is perfumed from large patches of sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*) and Arizona lupine (*Lupinus arizonicus*). Desert sunflower (*Gerea canescens*) is in great numbers spreading out to the horizon. Many other colorful species are scattered about and need to be seen. Don't attempt to drive up Coyote Canyon. Walk if you have time. Continue east on SR-22 into the badlands. There are good pullouts along the road to use. The sand verbena is turning the hill sides purple and the stately ocotillos are all fired up with red blooms. The best way to explore this area is to wander up the canyons and washes on foot. There are wonderful little spaces among the rocks and sandy patches which have little flowering jewels. The Booth's sun cups (*Eremothera boothii*) are extraordinarily large this year (See photos below). At Arroyo Salado, south of the highway, there are patches of mixed flowers including desert lilies (*Hesperocallis undulata*), lupine, desert sunflower, sand verbena along with all sorts of colorful mixed minis, too numerous to list.



**Booth's sun cups (*Eremothera boothii*). Photos by Tom Chester.**

This is a recent photo of the ABDSP entrance sign just a week a week ago!

**Photo by Tom Chester**



Further north and east of Palm Springs, the [Coachella Valley Preserve](#) in Thousand Palms is a rich habitat system of desert palm oases, desert riparian, sand dunes and alluvial plains. And there are wonderful, accessible trails through much of it. A recent visitor says it is popping with flowers! Just some to mention are primrose (*Chylismia claviformis*), desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*), sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*), thick leaf phacelia (*Phacelia crenulata*), Mojave ghostflower (*Mohavea confertiflora*), Spanish needles (*Palafoxia arida*), and so many more!



**Sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*), thick leaf phacelia (*Phacelia crenulata*).**  
**Photos by Naomi Fraga**

Our regional botanic gardens will all be looking terrific this year and offering tours and various events that highlight their bountiful seasonal blooms. [Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont](#), is the place to enjoy everything that native plant-worthy. The easy strolling on the mesa trails gets you to some spectacular displays of firecracker penstemon (*Penstemon eatonii*) and a favorite variety of manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* ‘Howard McMinn’)—one manzanita you can easily grow in your home landscape. Out in the northern “communities” section of the garden, where the hardy daily walkers are spotted, the golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) and big pod ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus*) can also be seen in full bloom.

One easy trail in Huntington Beach will satisfy two passions—walking among coastal sage wild flowers and birdwatching! The Brightwater Trail through stands of bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), fiddleneck (*Amsinckia* sp.) and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*) loops into the [Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve](#) that as one person puts it has “birds galore.”

The Habitat Gardens at [Elizabeth Learning Center](#) in Cudahy are a secluded refuge for re-wilding in SoEast LA! Most of the wildflower show can be seen from the sidewalk on Elizabeth Street in front of the campus without having to check in at the Main Office! Explore the Desert Habitat Garden to find cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*), desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), Spanish needle (*Palafoxia arida*), cryptantha (*Cryptantha* sp.), desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*), skeleton milkweed (*Asclepias subulata*), brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), blue bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), bird’s eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*) and Coulter’s lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*). The Vernal Pool Habitat Garden is in glorious wet phase after all the rain, and all five vernal pools are alive with fairy shrimp, clam

shrimp and many other vernal pool endemics! Look here also for Otay mountain lotus (*Hosackia crassifolia*), fringed-pod (*Thysanocarpus curvipes*) Menzies' fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*), globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), truncate-leaved lupine (*Lupinus truncatus*), miniature lupine (*Lupinus bicolor*), arroyo lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), and a beautiful blanket of goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*). Some additional species in the Chaparral Habitat Garden include woolly Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja foliolosa*), torhleaf goldeneye (*Viguiera laciniata*), sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), and Channel Island tree poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*). Elizabeth Learning Center is located off Elizabeth Street between Atlantic and Wilcox Avenues in Cudahy.



**Otay mountain lotus (*Hosackia crassifolia*). Photo by George Nanoski**

Several other of our favorite flower viewing sites did contact me this week to note that it is too early for flowers, but are expecting a good bloom in a few weeks. They include: **Carrizo Plain National Monument, Mt Figueroa in the Los Padres National Forest, and the Southern California Montane Botanic Garden, Oak Glen Preserve.** Something to look forward to!

That's it for this week. Look for our next report on **Friday, March 8** and check back each week for the most up to date information on southern and central California wildflowers.

**NATIVE PLANT & WILDFLOWER EVENTS:**

[Theodore Payne Foundation](#)

**Poppy Day Spring Plant Sale**

[Saturday, Mar 23, 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.

### [Placerita Canyon Natural Area](#)

Wildflower hike at Placerita every 4th Saturday. (This month, March 23)

“Blooms of the Season” walk, 9:30 – 10:30

We always find something interesting to see.

## **California Native Plant Society Hikes & Events**

Riverside-San Bernardino & Mojave Chapters

Field Trip to Corn Springs, Saturday, March 2. 10:00 am at Corn Springs Campground. Full day with drive time.

[www.blm.gov/visit/corn-springs-campground](http://www.blm.gov/visit/corn-springs-campground)

### [Coachella Valley Wildflower Festival](#)

Saturday, March 2 from 9 am to 5 pm at Palm Desert Civic Center Park.

<https://www.desertmountains.org/wildflower>

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