May 22, 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 wear masks and practice social distancing on trails.

In the Southern Sierra, foothill residents are enjoying the big bloom of California buckeye (Aesculus californica), bringing an explosion of color and amazing fragrance. The buckeye’s habitat associates, chaparral whitethorn (Ceanothus leucodermis) and California Yerba Santa (Eriodictyon californicum), are also very showy.


Santa Monica Mountain trails reopened on May 8, and here is a report from the Zuma Loop Trail. The report is 10 days old, so the bloom status may have changed. However, the weather has been relatively mild, so any decline in bloom may be slight. Also, the weedy mustard and milk thistle have grown tall and dense and lean into the trails. You don't want to have bear arms or legs around those thistles. That said, the good news is that the California natives are on display in force as well. There are places that are nothing but native plants. Some Catalina mariposa lilies (*Calochortus catalinae*) can still be seen, but they are finishing. Golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*) is growing next to white yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and there are lots of phacelias (*Phacelia* spp.). California everlasting (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*) and purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*) produce the classic musky sweet chaparral fragrance wafting in the air. This area burned in the Woolsey Fire of November 2018 and there are some interesting fire followers in bloom. The mountainsides rising from the back of the canyon are covered in wild morning glories (*Calystegia macrostegia*), to the point that it looks almost like snow from a distance. There is giant flowered phacelia (*Phacelia grandiflora*) and lovely San Luis blazing star (*Mentzelia micrantha*) which follow fires. On the valley floor there are tall pale, yellow bleeding hearts (*Ehrendorferia ochroleuca*)—flowers that are seen only after fires. There is scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*), creek monkey flower (*Erythranthe guttata*), purple clarkia (*Clarkia purpurea*) and many others as well.
The Devil's Punchbowl at a cool 4700 ft. elevation, is known for its amazing geology and spectacular desert views. The trails are also blooming and filling the openings between boulders and coloring gravely patches. California flannel bush (*Fremontodendron californicum*) is at peak bloom creating large shrubs of yellow flowers at the park entrance. 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 lovely and familiar chaparral species. Look for chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculata*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), heart-leaved penstemon (*Keckiella cordifolia*), Yerba Santa (*Eriodictyon sp.*) and yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*) sporting their late spring colors. Finding homes among these dominant plants, live the smaller 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*), scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*) and cobweb thistles (*Cirsium occidentale*). This is a truly delightful stroll among friends.

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.

Caspers Wilderness Park. Monkeyflowers (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*). Photos by Laura Camp.

This report takes us again along the Palms to Pines Highway in the San Jacinto Mountains. Stop at the Cahuilla Tewanet Overlook, just below Pinyon Flat, in order to see the beautiful sapphire blue woollystar (*Eriastrum densifolium*) in bloom along the trail. Take in the spectacular desert view while there. Maybe spot the cryptic Desert Bighorn sheep too. Travelling from the Overlook west to Garner Valley, the roadside landscape has bright pink Cleveland’s penstemon (*Penstemon clevelandii*) and heart-stopping patches of scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*). The first few sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*) are showing up in Garner Valley, and although the area is past bloom for some plants, Garner Valley is still fairly floriferous. In full bloom, are southern mountain grape soda lupine (*Lupinus excubitus var. austromontanus*), wild hyacinth (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), common for-get-me-not (*Cryptantha intermedia*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), fleabane (*Erigeron divergens*), and the California penstemon (*Penstemon californicus*). Other plants just beginning to flower include western lupine (*Lupinus formosus*), calico cactus (*Echinocereus engelmannii*), and Munz’s Mariposa lily (*Calochortus palmeri var. munzii*). Among the scattered little rock falls you will find the tiny, but gorgeous, spineflower
(Chorizanthe polygonoides var. longispina) and long-flowered thread stem (Nemacladus longiflorus). They are definitely worthy of the eye-squinting search.

Long-flowered thread stem (Nemacladus longiflorus), spineflower (Chorizanthe polygonoides var. longispina), Munz's Mariposa lily (Calochortus palmeri var. munzii), fleabane (Erigeron divergens).

Photos by Tom Chester.

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 tridenata*), Mojave sage (*Salvia mohavensis*), climbing snapdragon (*Maurandella antirrhiniflora*), desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), fish hook cactus (*Mammillaria dioica*), beavertail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris*), brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), 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 miser*)*, 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*) and chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*). Some additional species in the Chaparral Habitat Garden include woolly Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja foliolosa*), California wild rose (*Rosa californica*), Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), pink fairy duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*), tohleaf 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. Wishbone bush (*Mirabilis laevis*), thread leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*), Santa Cruz Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*), San Diego mesa mint (*Pogogyne abramsii*). Photos by George Nanoski.

That’s it for this week. Look for our last report on **Friday, May 29th**

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, LA County Parks, Placerita Canyon Nature Center

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.

This Friday, May 22 at 5:30 pm, we’ll hear from Theodore Payne Foundation Volunteer Engagement Coordinator Brenda Kyle (@chaparralchic) about upcoming volunteer opportunities with @TheodorePayne. Then we’ll talk with TPF Board President DJ Peterson in his urban habitat haven adjacent to downtown LA. In the second half of the show, Evan dialogues with Krista Reger of Metropolitan Water District and Pamela Berstler of Green Gardens Group, about where our water comes from and how we can make our gardens more sustainable and in sync with our environment.