March 12, 2021

Theodore Payne Foundation’s Wild Flower Hotline is made possible by donations, memberships and sponsors. Please support the Hotline today!

It’s been a dry winter and wildflowers may be sparse this spring. The native shrubs and perennials however are dependable in showing their color. It will be a floral treasure hunt for all of us. COVID-19 restrictions are still appropriate in public places and different for each county, so visit websites and do your homework before venturing out to see wildflowers.

The Ranger at Carrizo Plain National Monument reports that the hills are still mostly brown with a few green patches, yet unidentified, in various places. They are not expecting much of a “photo-op” bloom this year.

Placerita Canyon Nature Center reports having a slow start to this year’s bloom. However, along the Ecology Trail the early flowering perennial shrubs are showing color and well worth visiting. Check out the Chaparral currant (*Ribes malvaceum*), wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*) and hoary ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*). The California peony (*Paeonia californica*) is starting to send up new stems, no flowers yet. That’s something to anticipate. A stroll along the Heritage Trail will present you with more colorful perennials like golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*). Along the Canyon Trail, look for big berry manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glauca*).
Check out the PoppyCam live feed camera at the Antelope Valley State Poppy Reserve. The live stream of the Reserve shows brown hillsides as far as the eye can see. It will not be “a significant poppy or wildflower year” at our state’s popular Reserve. Poppies (Eschscholzia californica) like most other California native wildflower species require late fall and winter good germination to occur. We just didn’t get that seasonal water requirement in the winter of 2020-21. The rainfall we have received in the last few days may be “too little, too late” to make a difference, but we’ll see!

There are some nice flowers, given the dry circumstances, at the Mission Creek Preserve near Desert Hot Springs. These desert beauties can be found while hiking between the trailhead parking lot and the divide between the Mission Creek and Whitewater Canyon Trails. Enjoy the yellow beacons of several desert shrub species including Parish’s goldeneye (Bahiopsis parishii), sweetbush (Bebbia juncea), brittlebush (Encelia farinosa), narrowleaf golden bush (Ericameria linearifolia), creosote bush (Encelia farinosa), and bladderpod (Peritoma arborea). The smaller, yellow annuals like bristly fiddleneck (Amsinckia tessellata), sun cups (Camissoniopsis pallida), and common goldfields (Lasthenia gracilis), join the other colorful blooms of common phacelia (Phacelia distans), wild canterbury bells (Phacelia minor), Fremont’s pincushion (Chaenactis fremontii), and desert chicory chicory (Rafinesquia neomexicana) in adding color to the dry landscape.

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park. A poor rainfall year has resulted in a poor flower year in most places of the Anza Borrego Desert State Park. As typical in poor rainfall years, there are flowers in some places west of Borrego Springs, but usually in small numbers and scattered over a large area. Canyons and roadides have the best flowers. There are some places that are quite rewarding for flowers as long as you don't expect to be overwhelmed with a super bloom. The best areas now are along State Route 2 in lower Box Canyon, Mason Valley, Rainbow Canyon and the Palm Canyon area. Look for white woolly daisy (Monoptilon bellioides) and bright pink Bigelow’s monkey flower (Mimulus bigelovii). Both are tiny and found in sandy patches. Desert dandelion (Malacothrix glabrata), brown-eyed primrose (Chylismia claviformis ssp. claviformis), chia (Salvia

**columbariae**, forget-me-not (*Cryptantha* spp.) and bajada lupine (*Lupinus concinnus*) are scattered and red flowered chuparosa shrubs (*Justicea californica*), stand out among them. The pretty pink rock hibiscus (*Hibiscus denudatus*) is usually hidden among rocks in canyons. Clearly, the flowers are out there if you go to the right places and work at finding them.

Several wild spaces in Long Beach are showing off their late winter blooms! Meander through the [Colorado Lagoon](https://www.coloradolagoon.org/) and [Jack Dunster Marine Biological Reserve](https://www.jdmb.org/) to find blue dicks (*Dipterostemon capitatum*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), blue eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), Arroyo lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), encelia (*Encelia californica*), giant coreopsis (*Leptosyne gigantea*), Santa Barbara milkvetch (*Astragalus trichopodus*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), California four o’clock (*Mirabilis laevis crassifolia*), golden bush (*Isocoma menziesii*), beach evening-primrose (*Camissoniopsis cheiranthifolia*), chalk dudleya (*Dudlea pulverulenta*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), St. Catherine’s lace (*Eriogonum giganteum*), island snapdragon (*Galvesia speciosa*), several sage species (*Salvia spp.*), coast prickly pear (*Opuntia littoralis*), coastal cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*), Catalina cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia lyonii*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*).

The Habitat Gardens at [Elizabeth Learning Center](https://www.elizabethlearningcenter.org/) responded nicely to the brief, yet significant rain received at the end of January. Most of their blooms can be seen from the sidewalk on Elizabeth Street in front of the campus! Flowers in the Desert Habitat Garden © 2020 Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers & Native Plants. No reproduction of any kind without written permission.
include cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*), catsclaw (*Senegalia greggii*), desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), Emory’s globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea emoryi var. emoryi*), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), jojoba (*Simmondsia chinensis*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), cryptantha (*Cryptantha sp.*), brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*), fiveneedle pricklyleaf (*Thymophylla pentachaeta*), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), blue bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), and coulter’s lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*). The Vernal Pools Garden contains Menzies’ fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*), miniature lupine (*Lupinus bicolor*), arroyo lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), wart-stemmed ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), california poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), spinescrub (*Adolphia californica*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), boxthorn (*Lycium californicum*), goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*), fringe-pod (*Thysanocarpus curvipes*), and del mar manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa ssp. crassifolia*). Additionally, the vernal pools are in glorious aquatic phase with many fairy shrimp, clam shrimp, and vernal plants beginning their cycles anew, beneath ephemeral waters! Elizabeth Learning Center is located off Elizabeth Street between Atlantic and Wilcox Avenues in Cudahy.

Tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*). Photo by George Nanoski

That’s it for this week. Look for our next report on **Friday, March 19** and check back each week for the most up to date information on southland central California wildflowers.

### NATIVE PLANT AND WILD FLOWER EVENTS

**THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION**

**POPPY DAY SPRING PLANT SALE:** Saturday, March 25-27, 8:30am-4:30pm.
Discounts to members, 15% off; non-members, 10% off all on plants, seed, and TPF gear!

**2021 THEODORE PAYNE ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT GARDEN TOUR:** April 16-18

For details on both events go to https://theodorepayne.org