March 26, 2021

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

COVID-19 restrictions are still appropriate in public places and different for each county, so visit websites first in planning your trip.

At **Placerita Canyon Nature Center** in Newhall, spring is slow in arriving for annual wildflowers. However, there is a diversity of reliable chapparal shrubs in bloom along the Canyon Trail. A hiker should seek out the pink flowering chapparal currant (*Ribes malvaceum*), sugarbush (*Rhus ovata*), and the fragrant white blossoms of hoary leaved ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*). Deeper in the canyon areas where more shade and moisture are available, take in the majesty of the sycamore trees (*Platanus racemosa*) and flowering ash (*Fraxinus dipetela*). Wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*) can be seen climbing up and over the shrubs and trees to get their place in the sun. Back out in the open, sunnier locations, look for the nice purple and yellow combo of purple nightshade (*Solanum parishii*) and golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*). There are also some nice patches of goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) surrounded by black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). If you are entering via the Walker Ranch parking area, there is a large stand of golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) nearby.

Spring color has been found in the **Santa Monica Mountains** recently! Along Dirt Mulholland east of Reseda Blvd and the Marvin Braude Mulholland Gateway Park see flowering big pod ceanothus (*Ceanothus macrocarpa*). Purple nightshade (*Solanum parishii*) contrasts nicely with the bright yellow California brittle brush flowers (*Encelia californica*). Nice stands of California cudweed (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*) are growing along the trail. Despite their unfortunate “cudweed” moniker, the flowers are shimmering little pearls. Deerweed (*Acmispon glabrata*) is showy with tiny yellow flowers cloaking the bright green stems. Occasional bush poppies (*Dendromecon rigida*) are blooming and wishbone bushes (*Mirabilis laevis*) dot the dry hills above the trail. Further east along the roadsides, look for green bark ceanothus (*Ceanothus spinosus*) washing the landscape with pale blue and seen along with the creamy white flowers of mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). The trail is mainly for recreational mountain bikers, but a careful hiker may also enjoy this scenic road.

Along Box Canyon Road in the **Mecca Hills** south of I-10 and the Joshua Tree National Park, there is a surprising number of wildflowers given the dry conditions. The first to be noticed are the large blue palo verdes (*Parkinsonia floridana*) trees with masses of yellow
flowers lining the roadway. The ubiquitous creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), Hoffmannseggia (*Hoffmannseggia microphylla*) and brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*) add to the dominant yellow color palette. Annuals include heartleaf sun cup (*Chylismia cardiophylla*), desert trumpet (*Eriogonum inflatum*), Spanish needle (*Palafaxia arida*), arrow-leaf (*Pleurocoronis pluriseta*), and dyeweed (*Psorothamnus emoryi*). Three annuals, turtleback (*Psathyrotes annua*), fan-leaved tiquilia (*Tiquilia plicata*) and Palmer's crinkle mat (*Tiquilia palmeri*) have oddly textured leaves that are slightly more interesting than their pretty little flowers. The highlight of the trip, however, is finding the Mecca aster (*Xylorhiza cognata*). The small shrub with its luminous lavender-purple flowers with neon orange centers, are mostly found along canyon edges. All this color is made even more spectacular by the surrounding and dramatic rock formations.

In **Anza-Borrego Desert State Park**, flowers can be found if you are willing to hike into the canyons. Oriflamme Canyon is reached by driving a good dirt road a couple of miles west of S-2 in Mason Valley. Hiking then toward the campground, it is probably at peak bloom with a nice number of flowers all along the route. First noticed, is blooming deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*) with tiny yellow flowers spotted among large patches of blue Coulter's lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*). In places, lupine appears with chia (*Salvia columbariae*) making it a spread of blue and purple. Woven into that blanket are flecks of lavender from caterpillar phacelia (*Phacelia cicutaria*). A nice bright red and golden-yellow combo of paintbrush (*Castilleja foliolosa*) with goldenbush (*Ericameria linearifolia*) are scattered about the trail. In the flatter area just below the campground, strigose lotus (*Acmispon strigosus*) is quite abundant covering much of the ground. By the way, driving to Anza-Borrego on State Route 76 near the road to Palomar Mountain, stinging lupine (*Lupinus hirsutissimus*) lines the road and the vivid pink San Diego pea (*Lathyrus vestitus alefeldii*) is vining its way through the shrubs along the highway. Goldfields (*Lasthenia* sp.) are making good displays in the Lake Henshaw area and lupines are greeting you along S2 in upper San Felipe Valley.
An amazing wildflower outing awaits those that seek out Point Loma Peninsula Ecological Reserve in San Diego! Southern maritime chaparral is popping with color! The Bayside and other trails have bright yellow sea dahlia (*Leptosyne maritima*), flowering Shaw’s agave (*Agave shawii*). The woolly paintbrush has a yellow variant blooming as well. Wart-stem ceanothus ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), wishbone bush (*Mirabilis laevis*), lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), deerweed (*Acmispon glabrata*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus var. macrocarpus*) are showy as well. Virgin’s bower (*Clematis lasiantha*), Santa Barbara milkvetch (*Astragalus trichopodus*), cliff spurge (*Euphorbia misera*), and the under-appreciated cudweed (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*) all have creamy white blossoms that stand out among their more colorful botanical neighbors.

![Red woolly paintbrush (Castilleja foliolosa), and yellow variant. Photo by George Nanoski](image)


(Bergerocactus emoryi). Additionally, the vernal pools are still in glorious aquatic phase with many fairy shrimp, clam shrimp, and vernal plants frantically going about their life cycles before the inevitability of desiccation! Elizabeth Learning Center is located off Elizabeth Street between Atlantic and Wilcox Avenues in Cudahy.

Brittle bush (Encelia farinosa). Photo by George Nanoski

That’s it for this week. Look for our next report on Friday, April 1 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:** 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](https://theodorepayne.org)
