May 20, 2022

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The Theodore Payne Wild Flower Hotline offers free weekly on-line and recorded updates on the best locations for viewing spring wild flowers in Southern and Central California. All locations are on easily accessible public lands and range from urban to wild, distant to right here in L.A.

The slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains are quite floriferous in their recovery from the devastating fires of the past years.

The Mt. Wilson Trail to First Water above Sierra Madre is in most places lined with wildflowers. Peering up from a ground-hugging plant are dozens of tiny white flowers with deep maroon centers. This is the red gland euphoria (Euphorbia melanadenia). Other white-flowering annuals here shimmer in the crisp mountain air and include cliff asters (Malacothrix saxatilis var. tenuifolia), cryptantha (Cryptantha intermedia), pincushion flowers (Chaenactis artemisiifolia), caterpillar phacelia (Phacelia cicutaria) and California chicory (Rafinesquia californica). Pastel colors are interspersed within this white lacework. Blues from Coulter’s lupine (Lupinus sparsiflorus), chia (Salvia columbariae), canterbury bells (Phacelia minor); pink and lavender from punch-bowl clarkia (Clarkia bottae), and giant flowered phacelia (Phacelia grandiflora); yellow from whispering bells (Emmenanthe penduliflora var. penduliflora), California primrose (Eulobus californicus), and golden yarrow (Eriophyllum confertiflorum var. confertiflorum). Scarlet larkspur (Delphinium cardinale), cardinal catchfly (Silene laciniata ssp. laciniata) and cobweb thistle (Cirsium occidentale var. occidentale) flicker their vivid red blooms in this landscape too. The normally understated California chaparral shrubs are now blooming for a short while. Look for lovely native butterflies and other pollinators visiting deerweed (Acmispon glaber var. brevialatus), Douglas’s nightshade (Solanum douglasii), chamise (Adenostoma fasciculatum var. fasciculatum), Johnston’s honeysuckle (Lonicera subspicata var. denudata), heart-leaved keckilla (Keckiella cordifolia), Palmer’s ceanothus (Ceanothus spinosus), California buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum var. polifolium), southern bush monkeyflower (Diplacus longiflorus), chaparral yucca (Hesperoyucca brevifolia), white sage (Salvia apiana), black sage (Salvia mellifera), wishbone bush (Mirabilis laevis var. crassifolia) and elderberry (Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea). The not-so-subtle neon orange dodder (Cuscuta sp.) covers many of these shrubs like a wild orange wig. There are a few exceptional sightings as well. Tucked
around rocks and boulders, search for the sweet, little canyon dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *pumila*), with yellow flowers bursting from red stems from the center of this little succulent. Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) is gorgeous dressed in lavender flowers stitched with golden hairs. The most attractive plant you will encounter along the trail is one of our California icons—the holly-leaved Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). Its attractive forest green foliage is heavy with sprays of small white flowers. These will turn to bright red-orange at the end of the year.

Above: Red-gland euphorbia (*Euphorbia melanadenia*), toyon in flower and fruit (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*); below: dodder (*Cuscuta* sp.), Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), scarlet larkspur (*Delphinium cardinale*). Photos by Michael Charters

On the north facing slopes of the San Gabriel’s overlooking the high desert region, is a county park treasure you must visit. The [Devil's Punchbowl](https://www.theodorepayne.org/devils-punchbowl) is recovering from the 2020 Bobcat fire and showing off the technicolor flowers of the fire-following regime. The yellow palette is well represented by coreopsis (*Leptosyne bigelovii*), whispering bells (*Emmenanthe penduliflora*), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*), desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabra*), scale bud (*Anisocoma acaulis*) and golden bush (*Ericameria*). © 2022 Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers & Native Plants. No reproduction of any kind without written permission.
Contrasting reds include scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*), cobweb thistle (*Cirsium occidentale*) and the flame-colored desert mariposa lily (*Calochortus kennedyi*). Blue and white blooms of Palmers mariposa lily (*Calochortus palmeri*), white layia (*Layia glandulosa*), cryptantha (*Cryptantha muricata*), Mojave linanthus (*Leptosiphon breviculus*), phacelias (*Phacelia distans* and *P. fremontii*), and chia (*Salvia columbariae*) are scattered about. Splendid gilia (*Saltugilia splendens*) lives up to its name with vivid pink blossoms and sky-blue pollen occupying the flower’s center. This scene is set within an amazing geologic backdrop that encompasses both lush mountain terrain and shadow desert panoramas.

Meanwhile, over in the coastal Santa Monica Mountains, many of the rare Humboldt lily (*Lilium humboldtii*) are blooming, mostly on the trail to Trippet Ranch. Over the next several weeks there should be quite a show put on by these lilies. You cannot miss them.
The current report out of Pinnacles National Park north of King city, features many remarkable May flowers. The highlight plant this month is the pink-lavender fairy fan (*Clarkia breweri*). This plant is endemic to California where it is known from only seven counties in the central part in the state. It is a beautiful notch-petaled, pink-lavender colored clarkia that commonly flowers in late spring. Look also for the butterfly mariposa lily (*Calochortus venustus*) poking up in the landscape. This flowering bulb plant is a dramatic member of the lily family. The flowers vary in size and color, but all forms are intricately patterned. Mariposa means “butterfly” in Spanish. Another lovely bloom is that of the crinkled wild onion (*Allium crispum*). You know that you have correctly identified this beauty by noticing the wrinkled, deep pink, inner petals. Elsewhere in the Park, catch sight of the scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*) and it appears to be in perpetual motion, because the red flowers are rarely seen without hummingbirds flitting about from blossom to blossom. Other colorful members of the Pinnacles flora on display now include yellow pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula*) woolly blue curls (*Trichostema lanatum*), orange fire poppy (*Papaver heterophyllum*), golden ear-drops (*Dicentra chrysantha*), and pink hedge nettle (*Stachys rigida*).

At Placerita Canyon Nature Center in Newhall, the Canyon an Ecology trails are suggested pathways for seeing a variety of colorful native plants, many of which are also recovering from a past fire at the edges of the nature center. Chaparral flowering shrubs include elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*), Southern honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata*), and chamise (*Adenostema fasciculatum*). California wild rose (*Rosa californica*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), Yerba Santa (*Eriodictyon crassifolium*), and woolly blue curls (*Trichostema lanatum*), slender stem sunflower (*Helianthus gracilis*), have subtle pastel colors. Heart-leaf bush penstemon (*Keckiella cordifolia*) stands out from the others with red flowers frequented by hummingbirds. Blooming perennials that are a riot of colors include sticky monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), deerweed (*Acmispon glabrata*), scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*), and cobweb thistle (*Cirsium occidentale*). Showy annuals that linger along the trails are yellow pincushion, (*Chaenactis glabriuscula*), popcorn flowers (*Plagiobothrys* sp.), wild licorice (*Glycyrrhiza lepidota*), caterpillar phacelia (*Phacelia cicutaria*), cliff asters (*Malacothrix saxitalis*), California everlasting (*Pseudeognaphalium californica*) and the three Clarkia.
sisters—elegant clarkia, winecup and farewell-to-spring clarkias (*Clarkia unquiculata, C. purpurea, C. amonea*). Purple nightshade (*Solanum* sp.) and vervain (*Verbena* sp.) still add amazing purple color to the trails. Hiding under shrubs and perennials is a lovely succulent—southern California dudleya (*Dudleya lanceolata*), the lovely butterfly mariposa lily (*Calochortus venustus*) surprises you at every glance because the color is so variable, but all color forms are decorated with a maroon spot displayed on each petal.
Throughout the California Botanic Garden in Claremont, the narrowleaf milkweed (Asclepias fascicularis) is now in bloom and attracting monarchs! Toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia) just started showing clusters of tiny white flowers. The beautiful fern-leaf ironwood (Lyonothamnus floribundus) is displaying clusters of white flowers that contrast nicely with the deep green foliage. More colorful entries this week include the scarlet monkeyflower (Erythranthe cardinalis) and coyote mint (Monardella villosa). Hooker’s evening primrose (Oenothera elata) is standing tall and greeting you with lovely yellow blossoms. Other notable blooms to seek out include cobweb thistle (Cirsium occidentale), many-flowered linanthus (Leptosiphon floribundus), and Colorado four o'clock (Mirabilis multiflora). Apache plume (Fallugia paradoxa), hedgehog cactus (Echinocereus engelmannii), and several prickly pears (Opuntia sp.) are blooming in the desert garden. The large, colorful clusters of flowers on the desert willows (Chilopsis linearis) are bursting into bloom. Some of the bold Matilija poppy (Romneya coulteri) can also be found scattered in the desert garden. Other exciting new blooms include California buckeye, (Aesculus californica) growing on the mesa. The red-flowered, heart leaved keckiella (Keckiella cordifolia) is also occupying some prime real estate on the mesa under the Coast live oaks (Quercus agrifolia).

Late Spring wildflowers still dazzle at the E.L.C. Habitat Gardens! Species in the desert garden include thistle sage (Salvia carduacea), desert senna (Senna armata), Coves’ cassia (Senna covesii), catclaw (Senegalia greggii), jojoba (Simmondsia chinensis), sweet bush (Bebbia juncea), creosote bush (Larrea tridentata), showy penstemon (Penstemon spectabilis), desert lavender (Condea emoryi), apricot mallow (Sphaeralcea ambigua), cryptantha (Cryptantha sp.), bladderpod (Peritoma arborea), brittle bush (Encelia farinosa), fiveneedle pricklyleaf (Thymophylla pentachaeta), wishbone bush (Mirabilis laevis var. villosa), climbing milkweed (Funastrum cynanchoides var. hartwegii),
silver puffs (*Uropappus lindleyi*), blue bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), bird’s eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*) and Coulter’s lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*). The vernal pool area contains clustered tarweed (*Deinandra fasciculata*), California sage (*Salvia californica*), chaparral prickly pear (*Opuntia oricola*), coastal cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), school bells, a.k.a. blue dicks (*Dipterostemon capitatus*), golden spined cereus (*Bergerocactus emoryi*), San Diego ceanothus (*Ceanothus cyaneus*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazordia squarrosa*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), and Otay mesa mint (*Pogogyne nudiuscula*). Some additional species in the chaparral garden include scarlet larkspur (*Delphinium cardinale*), Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*), blue paloverde (*Parkinsonia florida*), woolly paintbrush (*Castilleja foliolosa*), calico monkeyflower (*Diplacus pictus*), fairy lantern (*Calochortus albus*), splendid mariposa lily (*Calochortus splendens*), Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), southern mountain misery (*Chamaebatia australis*), chaparral nightshade (*Solanum xanti*), pink fairy duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*), black sage (*Salvia eriophylla*), giant coreopsis (*Leptosyne gigantea*), California rose (*Rosa californica*), sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), Santa Cruz Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*) and Orcutt’s hazardia (*Hazardia orcuttii*). Elizabeth Learning Center is located off Elizabeth Street between Atlantic and Wilcox Avenues in Cudahy. Most gardens can be seen from the sidewalk in front of the school without having to check in at the Main Office.

That’s it for this week. Look for our next report on **Friday, May 27th** and check back each week for the most up to date information on southland central California wildflowers.

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NATIVE PLANT AND WILD FLOWER EVENTS

THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION

- Many education classes on gardening with natives are being offered at the Theodore Payne Foundation this month. Find more information and registration details at theodorepayne.org

PLACERITA CANYON NATURE CENTER

Blooms of the Season Hikes
4th Saturday of each month at 9:30, (May 28)
Meet at the front steps of the Nature Center.
Open House is May 14 from 10-2
Visit Placerita Canyon Nature Center