More rain is predicted for this week. Please be cautious when out exploring your favorite wildflower location. Check road and trail conditions at your destination before leaving home. Closure and landslide alerts are posted for your safety. Where you do have safe access, enjoy the wildflower viewing.

LOW DESERT REGION

This week’s report out of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is mostly about one amazing plant, but first let’s talk about getting there. Hwy 78 (east) through Pala, Pauma Valley and along Palomar to Lake Henshaw is a beautiful drive. Notice that the hills have bright patches of California poppies (Eschscholzia californica) in bloom. You will see bands of gorgeous blue ceanothus (Ceanothus sp.) as well. Arriving in ABDSP you may notice several wind-damaged plants. It has been unusually windy and cold here. However, in recent days it has warmed, and the bloom is improving. If you need to stay on paved roads near Borrego Springs, DiGiorgio, Henderson Canyon, and Old Springs Roads are easy cruises with safe pull-outs. Roadside fields are displaying stands of hairy desert sunflower (Geraea canescens), hot lavender-pink sand verbena (Abronia villosa var. villosa), and Arizona lupine (Lupinus arizonicus). At the corner of Di Giorgio Road and Henderson Canyon Road stop to photograph the sand verbena display, with its new accompaniments of pincushion flower (Chaenactis fremontii) and desert dandelion (Malacothrix glabrata). The sandy washes still harbor the best diversity of plants. Walking up coyote wash near Horse Camp you will see a
stunning sight of a couple hundred clumps of burrowweed strangler/orobanche \((Aphyllon cooperi)\). The plant is a root parasite, in this case, on burroweed \((Ambrosia dumosa)\). Many plants appear to have been carried down the wash by what must have been dramatic flow of storm water. In the picture below, you can see the erosion of the wash.

Above: Burrowweed strangler/orobanche \((Aphyllon cooperi)\) root parasite on burroweed \((Ambrosia dumosa)\). Below: Burrowweed strangler/orobanche \((Aphyllon cooperi)\) plant, individual flower. Photos by Don Rideout and Tom Chester.

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

At Pinnacles National Park in central California, many early bloomers can be found alongside trails. Big berry manzanita \((Arctostaphylos glauca)\) with its distinctive red bark, grey foliage, and clusters of white to pinkish flowers serve as a stately background to smaller colorful plants. Warrior’s plume \((Pedicularis densiflora)\) and woolly paintbrush \((Castilleja foliolosa)\), both root parasites drawing nutrients from their shrubby hosts, dot the landscape with their bright red flower-like bracts. Padre’s
shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii* var. *patula*) are standing tall throughout the grassy meadows and hillsides. Red maids (*Calandrinia menziesii*) and milkmaids (*Cardamine californica*) — not related — can be seen spreading low along the trailside and are some of the earliest bloomers in the park. Hillside gooseberries (*Ribes californicum*) are early flowering shrubs with abundant pendant red flowers enjoyed by area hummingbirds. Gooseberries also host several butterfly species. **Be sure to check road and trail status at Pinnacles before visiting.**

![Warrior’s plume (*Pedicularis densiflora*), milkmaids (*Cardamine californica*), Padre’s shooting star (*Primula clevelandii*). Photos by Michael Charters.](image1)

In the southern Sierra foothill woodland east of Visalia, fiddleneck (*Amsinckia eastwoodiae*) and popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys nothofulvus*) have been blooming since the middle of February. They are the spring harbingers in this area, akin to seeing your first robin of spring. The diminutive but splashy red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*) are putting on a “red-hot” show of their own. Standing out in the landscape you may spot a whiteleaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos viscida*)—a handsome shrub with soft pink urn-shaped flowers clustered among whitish-green foliage. Foothill poppies (*Eschscholzia caespitosa*) are opening their bountiful pale-yellow blossoms slowly as the temperature warms regionally. Soon they will carpet the hillsides along with silver bush lupines (*Lupinus albifrons*). That should be an impressive sight! If you are driving near and about Lake Kaweah, be sure visit Dry Creek and pastoral Yokhol Valley Road for grand displays of the fiddleneck and popcorn flower spectacle.

![Fiddleneck (*Amsinckia eastwoodiae*) and popcorn flower (*Plagiobothrys nothofulvus*); silver bush lupine (*Lupinus albifrons*) in foothills near Lake Kaweah in southern Sierra foothills. Photos by Mike Wall.](image2)
**Charmlee Wilderness Park** in Malibu is in its fifth year of plant recovery and trail restoration following the 2018 Woolsey Fire. The trails provide beautiful ocean views, post-fire wildflowers and spectacular wildlife. Check out the animal cam videos on the Charmlee Park website. There are oh, so many colorful plants in bloom along the trails. Here are some you may encounter on your hike. Young greenbark ceanothus (*Ceanothus spinosus*) have flowers that vary in color from white to pale blue. There are small-group gatherings of blue and purple stinging lupine (*Lupinus hirsutissima*), common phacelia (*Phacelia distans*), Parry’s phacelia (*Phacelia parryi*), and purple nightshade (*Solanum* sp.). The pinks and reds of hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.), prickly phlox (*Linanthus californicus*), and Padre’s shooting star (*Primula clevelandii* var. *gracilis*) can be found enjoying each other’s company along trails as well. Among them are spotty patches of creamy white Southern California locoweed (*Astragalus trichopodus*).

![Hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), purple nightshade (*Solanum* sp.), Parry’s phacelia (*Phacelia parryi*). Photos by Joseph Brooks.](image1)

The **Mishe Mokwa** trail begins at the end of the Yerba Buena Road off PCH just north of Malibu. The coastal chaparral flora is coming into bloom nicely but visit for the chocolate lilies (*Fritillaria biflora*). Yummy! In addition, the footpath below the trailhead parking lot goes down to a boggy wetland that is full of Padre’s shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii* var. *gracilis*).

![Chocolate lilies (*Fritillaria biflora*). Photos by Michael Charters.](image2)
SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

The Ecology Trail at Placerita Canyon Nature Center is starting its transition from late-winter to early-spring color. Early bloomers like wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*) and chaparral currant (*Ribes malvaceum*) are fading, while the hoary ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*) is at its peak and cloaking the slopes in white. The wild cucumber is still twining its way over other shrubs, but instead of little white flowers, it is now brandishing spiny fruits that always evoke yelps and giggles from children. The California peony (*Paeonia californica*), usually tucked under larger, sheltering plants is displaying their distinctive, maroon-colored flowers which will reveal their hiding places for a short time. The fuchsia-flowering gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*) is hosting visitors in the hummingbird garden. Joining these lovely perennials this week are two colorful annuals. The common fiddleneck (*Amsinckia intermedia*) is unfurling its orange coiled inflorescences and cheerful yellow sun cups (*Camissoniopsis intermedia*) are lining the trail. Visit often as the emerging spectacle of flowering plants take their turn in the spring pageantry of color.

The California Botanic Garden has visitors experiencing the blues. The large collection of ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.) species have masses of tiny, delicate flowers and display every shade of blue imaginable; and the snowy-white varieties of ceanothus rival their blue cousins with their distinctive ceanothus perfume. Another group of “every-shade-of-blue” plant is the Douglas Iris (*Iris douglasiana*). Masses of these irises hang out along the mesa trails. Throughout, smaller plants are starting to put on their own show. Patches of California buttercup (*Ranunculus californicus*), fragrant pitcher sage (*Lepechinia fragrans*) and California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) are waiting to have their pictures taken with you.
INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Diamond Valley Lake is a reservoir in Hemet at the base of the San Jacinto mountains. It is a gem of a get-away to view wildflowers and is popular with the Inland Empire residents. Diamond Valley hosts a diverse flora representing annual species from both the desert and inland valleys. For spectacular vistas of the lake and its colorful hillsides, walk the Wildflower Loop Trail near the entrance. Take in the gorgeous array of California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*), baby blue-eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*), red maids (*Calandrinia menziesii*), tidy-tips (*Layia platyglossa*), lupines (*Lupinus* spp.), cream-cups (*Platystemon californicus*), chia (*Salvia columbariae*), canterbury bells (*Phacelia minor*), encelia (*Encelia farinosa*) and so much more.
**Elizabeth Learning Center** has flowers galore, as the Habitat Gardens continue rewilding southeast L.A! Colorful desert beauties include creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*) climbing milkweed (*Funastrum cynanchoides var. hartwegii*), blue bells (*Phacelia campanularia*), bird’s eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*) and coulter’s lupine (*Lupinus sparsiflorus*). All the vernal pools are full and teeming with fairy shrimp and other ephemeral creatures! The plants surrounding the pools include Menzies fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*), owl’s clover (*Castilleja exserta*), tidy tips (*Layia platyglossa*), fringe-pod (*Thysanocarpus curvipes*), Arroyo lupine (*Lupinus succulentus*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), school bells, a.k.a. blue dicks (*Dipterostemon capitatus*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), yellow-rayed goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*), cliff spurge (*Euphorbia misera*), and Del Mar manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa ssp. crassifolia*). The Chaparral Garden displays woolly paintbrush (*Castilleja foliolosa*), Nevin’s barberry (*Berberis nevinii*), pink fairy duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), miner’s lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*), Santa Rosa Island sage (*Salvia brandegeei*), red-skinned onion (*Allium haematochiton*), sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), Santa Cruz Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*), and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*). Whew! Go there! See this!

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. For a more immersive visit Tuesday - Friday, contact George Nanoski, the Habitat Gardens coordinator via email: gtn5586@lausd.net. His conference period is 10:30am - 12:20pm. A visit can be arranged after 3:30 when school is out.

Brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*) and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*). Photos by George Nanoski.
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