March 22, 2024

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY!

While superblooms are a beautiful and awe-inspiring natural phenomenon, they are also delicate and are easily damaged by human activity, so it is important to enjoy them responsibly and minimize the impact on fragile ecosystems.

Please always...

تضن العابدات وتنادي أطفالهن، لست معروفة بأنني أحب الأشبال، ولكنني أستمتع كثيراً بالطبيعة.

Stay on designated trails
Share the trails; be respectful of others
Visit on weekdays and/or off-peak hours, if possible
Do not collect or trample wildflowers
Remember your experiences through photos and leave no trace.

Low Desert Region

Anza Borrego Desert State Park is becoming a mixed bag of viewing locations depending on what you want to see and where you want to drive or hike. I’ve noted before that descending into ABDSP via S22, you’ll notice a paucity of color in the adjacent landscape. Still only brittlebush (Encelia farinosa) and a few other species of desert shrubs are in bloom. The colorful annuals of the Montezuma Grade (S22) route will come when the weather warms. Chuparosa (Justicia californica), a common desert shrub, is ablaze with red wherever it grows in washes and canyons west of Borrego Springs. The entire desert floor at 1000 feet elevation and below displays desert dandelion (Malacothrix glabrata) in bloom forming fields of yellow from Hellhole Canyon Glorietta Canyon. The easiest venues for wildflower viewing if you only have time to drive through the Park, are in the Borrego Springs area—DiGiorgio Road, Henderson Canyon Road, Coyote Canyon washes and Arroyo Salado. Good displays of sand verbena (Abronia villosa var. villosa), dune evening primrose (Oenothera deltoides ssp. deltoides), browneyes evening primrose (Chylismia claviformis var. peirsonii), desert lily (Hesperocallis undulata), desert sunflower (Geraea canescens), pygmy gold poppy (Eschscholzia minutiflora), and Arizona lupine (Lupinus arizonicus). This is truly the year of the desert lily! Hundreds of desert lilies in bloom can be found at almost every step of your walk. The “fabby” show of sand verbena and accompanying annuals in these low sandy areas are beginning to wind down, however, so visit before month’s end. Finally, if you want to watch serious botany geeks swoon over the Bigelow’s ragged rock flower
shrub (*Crossosoma bigelovii*) growing among large boulders, visit Juanito Canyon. It is an uncommon and lovey shrub with an unfortunate name and botanists love seeing it in bloom! Here are some “just can’t get enough of it” photos.

Desert lily (*Hesperocallis undulata*), desert sunflower (*Geraea canescens*), sand verbena (*Abronia villosa var. villosa*). Photos by Mike Wall. Chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*). Photos by Emily Sluiman. Bigelow’s ragged rock flower shrub (*Crossosoma bigelovii*). Photo by Tom Chester.
Desert dandelion (*Malacothrix glabrata*), Ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*) plant and flowers. Photos by Mike Wall.

Henderson Canyon Road, Font’s Viewpoint. Photos by Mike Wall.
Southern Sierra Foothills

In the southern Sierra foothill woodland east of Visalia at 1,000 – 1,400’ elevation, the iconic blue oaks and redbuds are revealing new leaves and flowers, a sure sign spring is coming to the foothills. Eastwood’s fiddleneck (Amsinckia eastwoodiae), shooting stars (Primula clevelandii var. patula), streambank springbeauty (Claytonia parviflora) and rusty popcornflower (Plagiobothrys nothofulvus) are blooming nicely, and soon other colorful wildflowers will be joining them. The diminutive but splashy redmaids (Calandrinia ciliata) and milkmaids (Cardamine sp.) are red and white beacons spotlighting themselves in the dark shade under oaks. Standing out in the landscape you may spot a whiteleaf manzanita (Arctostaphylos viscida)—a large, 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). Frogs and Sierra newts are out enjoying a wet spring. Lichens, mushrooms, and mosses abound.

The Carrizo Plain

A tapestry of yellow and orange cover the rolling hills of the Carrizo Plain, as the hillside daisies (Monolopia lanceolata), goldfields (Lasthenia sp.) forked fiddleneck (Amsinckia vernicosa var. furcata), have suddenly become prominent. It appears it will be a decent wildflower year at Carrizo Plain National Monument. Recent rainfall and warmer temperatures are launching a bloom in low spots on the Plain, including around Soda Lake. Soon patches of blues and purples will appear within the yellow-orange landscape as the owl’s clover (Castilleja exserta), Great Valley phacelia (Phacelia ciliata), and baby blue eyes (Nemophila menziesii) popup. Unfortunately, exotic grasses are doing well this year as well and can compete with and obscure the colorful wildflowers in places. One final note of caution: Most of the roads in Carrizo Plain are in decent shape, but several of them—especially Simmler Road and Panorama Road which cross the Plain—have low spots that are
still wet and muddy and are places where one can get a car stuck. Towing services are not available, so be safe and don’t take chances with your vehicle or yourself.

Los Padres National Forest

It’s been a cold and wet season but early bloomers are portending good viewing to come. Large patches of California poppies (Eschscholzia californica), purple shooting stars (Primula clevelandii ssp. clevelandii), California buttercups (Ranunculus californicus) and goldfields (Lasthenia sp.) reside on the grassy slopes that can be seen driving Figueroa Mountain Road from Los Olivos. Stop and take delight in finding numerous chocolate lilies (Fritilaria biflora) at the Forest Service viewpoint! The flower stems are longer than usual, and this normally shy bloom can easily be seen rising above the new grass throughout the meadow. “Poppy Hill”, a favorite viewing spot along the road, is weaving its annual gold and blue quilt of poppies and sky lupines. It’s early yet for photographers but give it another week of warm weather. Stay tuned here for future Mt. Fig. reports. It’s going to be awash in colorful wildflowers soon!
San Gabriel Mountains

Placerita Canyon Nature Center requires more sunny and warm days to fully rouse spring wildflowers from their slumber. The canyon is cool, shady and the creek is flowing fast. The Canyon Trail that follows Placerita Creek upstream to Walker Ranch traverses the water-gorged, fast flowing creek at several locations and is not recommended for hiking until the water recedes. However, the first ¼ mile of trail before first crossing displays some very handsome flowering plants that are worthy of being seen. Walk out to see California buckwheat (Eriogonum fasciculatum), arroyo willow (Salix lasiolepis), black sage (Salvia mellifera), big berry manzanita (Arctostaphylos glauca) and hairy ceanothus (Ceanothus oliganthus). The Ecology Trail, however, is an easy loop trail that begins and ends behind the Nature Center. No need to cross any streams. It takes you through chaparral, oak woodland, and riparian communities, all stunning now with fresh spring foliage. Hoaryleaf ceanothus (Ceanothus crassifolius), California peony (Paonia californica), purple nightshade (Solanum xanti), popcorn flowers (Plagiobothrys spp.), and fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (Ribes speciosum) with accompanying hummingbirds, will delight you. Wild cucumber (Marah macrocarpa) is winding it way up and around other larger plants to get its place in the sun.
This week at the Theodore Payne Foundation, the hot pinks of hummingbird sage (Salvia spathacea) and pink fairy-duster (Calliandra eriophylla) along with sunny yellow desert marigold (Baileya multiradiata) and creamy-flowered Santa Cruz Island buckwheat (Eriogonum arborescens) growing in the demonstration garden, are attracting many visitors. Pulling into the parking lot and walking the sales yard pathways visitors are tempted to take a closer look and photograph the colorful deep pink Western redbud (Cercis occidentalis), apricot mallow (Sphaeralcea ambigua), purple nightshades (Solanum xanti), bright yellow Channel Islands bush poppy (Dendromecon harfordii) and the subtle pink flowers of manzanita cultivars (Arctostaphylos sp. ‘John Dourley’ and Arctostaphylos bakeri ‘Louis Edmunds’). Trekking up Wildflower Hill adjacent to the sales yard, you will encounter fragrant purple sage (Salvia leucophylla), California bluebells (Phacelia minor) and chia (Salvia columbariae). Enjoy this SoCal spring smorgasbord responsibly.

The California Botanic Garden is flourishing in this week’s sunny, but mild weather. Nevin’s barberry (Berberis nevinii) is showcasing sprays of yellow flowers among its spiky, bluish-colored foliage just north of the wildflower meadow. Many bright members of the aster family are blooming around the garden, including sunflowers (Helianthus spp.), brittlebush (Encelia spp.) and desert marigold (Baileya multiradiata). Sages (Salvia spp.) abound dressed in varying pinks and purples. Blue-eyed grass (Sisyrinchium spp.) continues to dazzle along the mesa pathways. Signs of spring are not the same in different parts of California, but when the blush-color of new fresh foliage and tassel-like catkins of miniature flowers emerge on the state’s many oak tree species (Quercus spp.), you know it’s spring in the California woodlands. Many example of oak species are decked out in their spring colors now at the garden!
At The Environmental Nature Center in Newport Beach, the paths are lined with golden California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) swaying gracefully in the coastal breeze. The Nature Center is divided into different Southern California habitat types representing chaparral, desert, riparian and woodlands. A pastel palette of flowers is sprinkled throughout these gardens with sunny yellows from brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), California encelia (*Encelia californica*), bladderpod (*Cleomella arborea*), Indian mallow (*Abutilon palmeri*) and clusters of bright flowers borne on the Oregon grape (*Berberis aquifolium*). Shades of blue are displayed on the various California wild lilacs (*Ceanothus* spp.) and contrast with subtle pinks on the Western redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*), assorted buckwheat species (*Eriogonum* spp.) and coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.).

The Environmental Nature Center has taken Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary under its guardianship as well. Tucker is a 12-acre wildlife sanctuary located in Modjeska Canyon on the western slopes of the Santa Ana Mountains. It includes a natural history museum, trails, native plant garden and a bird observation deck. Visitors mainly go for the excellent birdwatching, but trails leading from the Sanctuary take you into classic chaparral vegetation. Check out the handsome pair of flowering shrubs lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*) and sugarbush (*Rhus ovata*) while staying clear of their botanical cousin poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) as it is also flowering now. Take caution!
Inland Empire

Still early for most wildflowers on the Crafton Hills Preserve but hiking along the Crafton Hills Ridge Trail you can get an idea what it will be like soon. Not far from the trailhead at Crafton Hills College (CHC), hoaryleaf (Ceanothus crassifolius) and woolly leaf ceanothus (Ceanothus tomentosus) are both blooming and can be seen covering slopes, along with a fair amount of common phacelia (Phacelia distans), miner’s lettuce (Claytonia sp.), rancher’s fiddleneck (Amsinckia menziesii var. intermedia), and golden yarrow (Eriophyllum confertiflorum). Rest under an oak and enjoy the company of plants just starting to bloom including wishbone bush (Mirabilis laevis) wild canterbury bells (Phacelia minor), tufted poppy (Eschscholzia caespitosa), red maids (Calandrinia menziesii), rock or southern bush monkeyflower (Diplacus longiflorus), cliff aster (Malacothrix saxatilis) and western blue-eyed grass (Sisyrinchium bellum). Parking is always free in the trailhead parking lot at Crafton Hills College, and free on weekends in all other parking lots on campus.
The Habitat Gardens at Elizabeth Learning Center are resplendent with vernal pools and early spring wildflowers! Colorful beauties in the Desert Habitat Garden include catclaw acacia (Senegalia greggii), creosote bush (Larrea tridentata), desert lavender (Condea emoryi), apricot mallow (Sphaeralcea ambigua), bladderpod (Cleomella arborea), brittlebush (Encelia farinosa), fiveneedle pricklyleaf (Thymophylla pentachaeta), climbing milkweed (Funastrum cynanchoides var. hartwegii), desert blue bells (Phacelia campanularia), bird’s eye gilia (Gilia tricolor) and Coulter’s lupine (Lupinus sparsiflorus). The Vernal Pools Habitat Garden contains common fiddleneck (Amsinckia menziesii), purple owl’s clover (Castilleja exserta), tidy tips (Layia platyglossa), sand fringe pod (Thysanocarpus curvipes), arroyo lupine (Lupinus succulentus), deerweed (Acmispon glaber), wart stemmed ceanothus (Ceanothus verrucosus), school bells (Dipterostemon capitatus), sawtooth goldenbush (Hazardia squarrosa), California poppy (Eschscholzia californica), yellow-rayed goldfields (Lasthenia glabrata), cliff spurge (Euphorbia misera), spine shrub (Adolphia californica), and Del Mar manzanita (Arctostaphylos glandulosa ssp. crassifolia). Additional species in the Chaparral Habitat Garden include Matilija poppy (Romneya coulteri), woolly paintbrush (Castilleja folioloosa), 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).
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 Monday – Friday (no Tuesdays), contact George Nanoski, the Habitat Gardens coordinator via email: gtn5586@lausd.net. His conference period is 10:30am – 12:20pm on Mondays and Thursdays, 9:00am – 10:15am on Wednesdays and Fridays. Or a visit can be arranged after 3:30 when school is out.

Nevin’s barberry (Berberis nevinii), Arroyo lupine (Lupinus succulentus), Matilija poppy (Romneya coulteri). Photos by George Nanoski.

That’s it for this week. Look for our next report on Friday, March 29 and check back each week for the most up to date information on southern California wildflower regions to visit.
Native Plant & Wildflower
Events Across SoCal

Placerita Canyon Nature Center

🌟 Blooms of the Season | 4th Saturdays | 9:30 AM
Learn about native plants on a hike with a docent. 4th Saturday of every month, meet on the patio at 9:30AM for a one-hour stroll. Bring your camera and questions. Visit Placerita Nature Center website for more information.

Theodore Payne Foundation

🌟 Poppy Days Spring Sale | March 29 & 30
Create an at-home superbloom! We’ll have a great selection of colorful annuals and other beautiful spring wildflowers. Members receive a 15% discount and nonmembers receive a 10% discount on all plants, seeds, and TPF gear. RSVP for parking: poppydays.eventbrite.com

🌟 Native Plant Garden Tour | April 13 & 14
Get ready to explore stunning gardens across greater Los Angeles! Each garden is a harmonious creation of Southern California’s climate, soil, natural vegetation, and native wildlife—don’t miss the chance to witness beauty and support critical wildlife habitat in one of the world’s biodiversity hotspots.
Tickets & details at: nativeplantgardentour.org

Prisk Native Garden

🌟 Prisk Native Garden Open House | April 7 & 14 | 1–4 PM
Admission is free. The garden is on the grounds of William F. Prisk Elementary School, in Long Beach.