March 8, 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...

- 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.

Again, we have the right conditions for an excellent wildflower viewing season across California. Please read the general viewing etiquette we posted in the sidebar to the left. We endeavor to include a variety of sites both far-reaching and close to home—deserts, mountains, and foothill valleys. Do visit the popular sites but try to expand your outdoor experience to other less-familiar trails as well.

Low Desert Region

Media outlets welcome visitors to Anza Borrego Desert State Park for good wildflower viewing. True, this is usually where the first big spring bloom occurs, but only if the desert has been blessed with significant annual rainfall. The timing of rainfall is key to a good bloom as well. This is the third consecutive year with both good summer season monsoonal rain and winter rainfall in the Borrego Desert. Good desert blooms consist of two very different components. The first component is from plants that responded to monsoonal rains (like this summer’s tropical storm Hillary in August 2023) with other plants responding to the usual late winter / early spring rains. The desert floor received two inches from Hillary, and we had enough winter rain to make a good display of wildflowers in most areas. A small number of locales are essentially at peak bloom now, such as the sandy area just north of Henderson Canyon Road, DiGiorgio Rd.; washes/trails in Hellhole, Glorietta and Coyote Canyons. Good displays of sand verbena (Abronia villosa), dune evening primrose (Oenothera deltoides), browneyed evening primrose...
Chylismia claviformis), desert lily (Hesperocallis undulata) and hairy desert sunflower (Geraea canescens) are in excellent bloom now. However, most areas at low to mid elevations are still two to four weeks away from peak bloom, and higher elevations are even farther away. If you are entering ABDSP via San Felipe Valley (2000’ elev.), you will encounter few annuals, but these striking perennials are amazing right now. Look for (you really can’t miss them) desert apricot (Prunus fremontii) and chuparosa (Justicia californica) blazing along highway S2.
Santa Monica Mountains

The giant coreopsis (*Leptosyne gigantea*) is blooming on ocean-facing, sunny slopes rising above Pacific Coast Highway (PCH). Keep your eyes focused on that famously treacherous road, however. One of the best places to safely pull off the highway and enjoy walking with the yellow giants is at Leo Carrillo State Park. Plan a day trip. Trail maps and other park features are described in the [park brochure](#).

Travel about 2 miles north of Leo Carrillo on PCH. Turn right on Yerba Buena Road and continue to where the Mishe Mokwa Trail and the Backbone Trail connect. The hills are covered in white blooming bigpod ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus*). In wet areas along the trail, displays of Padre’s shooting star (*Primula clevelandii*) are peaking and red-skinned onions (*Allium haematochiton*) are starting to bloom. Take caution walking around this fragile habitat.
San Gabriel & San Bernardino Mountains

It is a little early for the usual riotous bloom at Placerita Canyon Nature Center, but the creek is flowing fast, and the park is beautiful and green. Notably, the hills within and around the park are covered with hoary leaf ceanothus (Ceanothus crassifolius)—their lacy white blossoms contrasting with the lush green background. A few early bloomers are beginning to poke flowers out of their spring green foliage including California peony (Paeonia californica), purple nightshade (Solanum xanti), popcorn flowers (Plagiobothrys spp.), Chaparral currant (Ribes malvaceum), southern honeysuckle (Lonicera subspicata), and fuchsia flower gooseberries (Ribes speciosum).

The wet weather has brought forth some interesting mushrooms. Not flowers, but still colorful and interesting. Sunshine and warmer weather should encourage more annuals to appear along the trails.

Spring flowers have arrived in the California Botanic Garden! Several flowering shrubs are putting on a show around the garden, including chaparral currant (Ribes malvaceum), golden currant (Ribes aureum), hoary leaf ceanothus (Ceanothus crassifolius), and California lilacs (Ceanothus arboreus and C. thrysiflorus). On the mesa walk, western wallflower (Erysimum capitatum) is blooming abundantly. Many sages (Salvia spp.) are flowering, including hummingbird sage (Salvia spathacea) on the northern end of the mesa under the oaks. Firecracker penstemon (Penstemon eatonii) and bush monkeyflower (Diplacus aurantiacus) are also in full flower on the mesa at this time. Those interested in unusual flowers will want to look for the Dutchman’s pipevine (Aristolochia macrophylla) on the north side of the walls in the forest pavilion.
A stunning view of the San Bernardino Mountains awaits you when you hike through the nature preserve north of the California State University, San Bernardino campus (CSUSB). Blooming in abundance throughout is hoary leaf ceanothus (Ceanothus crassifolius) and common sunflower (Helianthus annuus). Just starting their bloom are Pomona milkvetch (Astragalus pomonensis), deerweed (Acmispon glaber), black sage (Salvia mellifera), common phacelia (Phacelia distans) and wild cucumber or chilicothe (Marah macrocarpa). Many more beauties are expected to pop up soon in warmer weather.

Not technically part of either mountain range is Cherry Canyon Park. This Park preserves over 130 acres in the San Rafael Hills, a small mountain range east of the Verdugo Mountains and south of the San Gabriel Mountains in the city of La Cañada-Flintridge. The Park is early in its blooming season. Here’s what you can find along its roughly 6 miles of fire road and trails. The showiest species is the hoary leaf ceanothus (Ceanothus crassifolius), with clusters of white flowers on large shrubs blanketing the slopes. Golden currant (Ribes aureum) is also widespread. The less common white-flowering currant (Ribes indecorum) is fading in bloom but still is showy. Fuchsia flower gooseberry (Ribes speciosum) is in full bloom and hummingbirds are busily sipping nectar from the copious number of red flowers. Look for chilicothe or wild cucumber (Marah macrocarpa) scrambling up and around trees and shrubs. Two-color rabbit tobacco (Pseudognaphalium...
biolettii) is robustly blooming in several places. California peony (*Paeonia californica*) is peeking out from under taller shrubs. Most have buds just beginning to open to large burgundy-colored flowers. Other species with just a few open flowers, but with many more to come soon, include bush monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and pipestem or chaparral clematis (*Clematis lasiantha*). Near the top of Cherry Canyon is the Cerro Negro lookout. North of that lookout you will find brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*) in bloom; south of the lookout you will find, instead, California bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*). Given the proximity to each other, you may see a few hybrid plants as well.

### Inland Empire

The [Santa Rosa Plateau](#) is in southwestern Riverside County, at the southern end of the Santa Ana Mountains. Six distinct habitat types reside on this land located less than 20 miles from the Pacific Ocean. A network of trails lets you go back in time to experience the natural and diverse landscape of California’s indigenous people. On the Vernal Pools Trail you will encounter a breathtaking display of shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*). Look for red bush monkeyflower (*Diplacus puniceus*) and the lovely and stately Eastwood’s manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa*) on the Adobe Loop Trail. Under the shade of ancient Engelmann oaks (*Quercus engelmannii*) grow patches of shiny yellow buttercups (*Ranunculus occidentalis*).

Shooting stars (*Primula clevelandii*), red bush monkeyflower (*Diplacus puniceus*). Photos by Emily Sluiman.

### Sun Valley

At [Theodore Payne Foundation](#), early bloomers like Nevin’s barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) and lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*) flank the entrance to the nursery sales yard alongside the constantly-flowering
Baja fairyduster (*Calliandra californica*) and a once-in-three-decades Shaw’s agave (*Agave shawii*) bloom. The nursery is dotted with blooming sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*), golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), Baja nightshade (*Solanum hindsianum*), and western vervain (*Verbena lasiostachys*), while the demonstration garden is seeing California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*), desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), and *Ceanothus* blooms. On the way up Wildflower Hill, showy penstemon (*Penstemon spectabilis*) and bladderpod (*Cleomella arborea*) line the trail while *Phacelia* and purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*) are in flower above—and just one newly budding longleaf bush lupine (*Lupinus longifolius*) is a sign of what’s to come. Bring paper, pen and camera when you visit TPF so you can document and make a wish list of the plants that you want growing in your own home garden. TPF will be having a plant sale at the end of March. (See EVENTS calendar at the end of this report).

Urban Los Angeles

The torrential rains in February made the Habitat Gardens at Elizabeth Learning Center resplendent with vernal pools and late winter 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*), climbing milkweed (*Funastrum cyananchoides var. hartwegii*), desert bluebells (*Phacelia campanularia*), bird’s eye glia (*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*), blue dicks (*Dipterostemon capitatus*), California poppy...
(Eschscholzia californica), yellowray goldfields (Lasthenia glabrata), cliff spurge (Euphorbia misera), California adolphia (Adolphia californica), and Del Mar manzanita (Arctostaphylos glandulosa ssp. crassifolia).

Additional species in their Chaparral Habitat Garden include Padre’s shooting star (Primula clevelandii), woolly paintbrush (Castilleja foliolosa), Nevin’s barberry (Berberis nevini), 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 Tuesday–Friday, 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.

That’s it for this week. Look for our next report on Friday, March 15 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

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 here.

🌟 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

Placerita Canyon Nature Center

🌟 Blooms of the Season | 4th Saturdays
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.

South Pasadena Nature Park

🌟 South Pasadena Parks Bike Ride and Picnic | March 16
Special tour of native plant garden and park. Meets at 9:00 AM. Registration required.