



THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION
for Wild Flowers & Native Plants

Wild Flower Hotline

Call 818-768-1802 ext 7 | Weekly Updates March–May

Theodore Payne Foundation's Wild Flower Hotline is made possible by [donations](#), and [memberships](#). Please support the Hotline today! The Theodore Payne Wild Flower Hotline offers free weekly online 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.

May 16, 2025

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY!

While California's blooms 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.

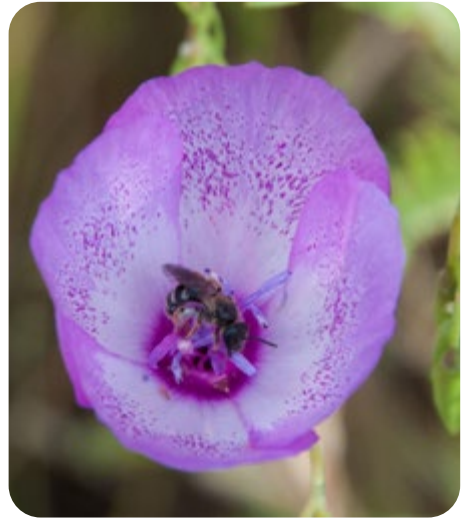
Please always...

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

In Southern California, the valleys and foothills are fading, leaving behind fruit and seed for next year's germination. Above 4000 feet in elevation however, many spring wildflowers are just coming into glorious bloom.

Southern Sierra Foothill Region

With a massive bloom of speckled clarkia (*Clarkia cylindrica*), spring is winding down in the foothill country of the southern Sierra. Intermingling with the speckled clarkia, the Spring Madia (*Madia elegans*) are still in bloom. Also prominent both along the highways and the trails are the fragrant California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) in early to mid bloom, an abundance of bright yellow rock bush monkey flower (*Diplacus calycinus*), and creamy white blooms of blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*). Along the trails one will still find colorful patches of mustang clover (*Leptosiphon montanus*) and the elegant Ithuriel's spear (*Triteleia laxa*). While the speckled clarkia is the one most impressive, two other farewell-to-spring species are found here and announcing the long hot quiet summer season: elegant clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*) and the lovely four spot clarkia (*Clarkia purpurea*).





Top row: speckled clarkia (*Clarkia cylindrica*). Second row: California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*). Third row: yellow rock monkey flower (*Diplacus calycinus*) and blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*). Fourth row: mustang clover (*Leptosiphon montanus*), Ithuriel's spear (*Triteleia laxa*). Fifth Row: four spot clarkia (*Clarkia purpurea*), elegant clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*). Bottom row: spring madia (*Madia elegans*) mixed with speckled clarkia (*Clarkia cylindrica*). Photos by Michael and Stephanie Wall.

Los Padres National Forest

At [Figueroa Mountain](#), it's "hide and seek" wildflowering in several places where the maturing tall grasses concealed many individual blooms. But for those willing to search, the mountain holds several flowering finds. Bouquets of small white Creamcups (*Platystemon californicus*), scattered purple Winecup Clarkia (*Clarkia purpurea*) and pink Checker Bloom (*Sidalcea malviflora*), and a vibrant hillside of Dudleya (*Dudleya* sp.). Very visible were white Globe Gilia (*Gilia capitata*) mixed with vivid lupine (*Lupinus* sp.).

In areas burned by the Station Fire, annuals are taking full advantage of the lack of competition for resources like water and sunlight. The bright orange poppy (*Eschscholzia* sp.) and the blankets of blue-white lupine (*Lupinus* sp.) coat the hillsides in the burned scar, contrasting with the charred skeletons of oaks and pines and the ash-covered ground. Nature's resilience is evident as almost every fire-blackened tree and bush has fresh green growth at its base.



Dudleya (*Dudleya* sp.), lupine (*Lupinus* sp.) mixed with globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), checker bloom (*Sidalcea malviflora*), creamcups (*Platystemon californicus*), winecups (*Clarkia purpurea*), oak regrowth. Photos by Don Vogt.

San Gabriel Mountain and Foothill Region

At the [Theodore Payne Foundation](#), late season wildflowers have emerged: globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), elegant clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*), and winecups (*Clarkia purpurea*). Showy penstemon (*Penstemon spectabilis*) is still a prolific bloomer decorating TPF's gardens in vivid purple. The pink flowering Violet penstemon (*Penstemon x parishii*) are dotting the various demonstration gardens. More Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*) flowers have opened along the parking lot and are inviting visitors to explore more in the garden. Chia (*Salvia columbariae*) can be found blooming around the demonstration gardens, Wildflower Hill, and the sales yard

along with California brittlebush (*Encelia californica*), common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), many sages (*Salvia* spp. and cultivars), Elizabeth bush anemone (*Carpenteria californica* 'Elizabeth'), and mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*). Coastal cholla cactus (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*), prickly pear (*Opuntia littoralis*) and beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris*) are also very showy around the nursery. In the understory of the gardens' mature trees and shrubs, Douglas irises (*Iris douglasiana*) are still showcasing a rainbow of colors, along with the deep pink pom-poms of the red flowering buckwheat (*Eriogonum grande* var. *rubescens*).



Globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), elegant clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*), Coastal cholla cactus (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*), red flowering buckwheat (*Eriogonum grande* var. *rubescens*), mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*). Photos by Peri Litvak.

Some spectacularly colorful plants are in bloom at the [California Botanic Garden](#). Heading the list of unusual colors is the sulfur yellow Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*). Electric and royal blues, bright pinks, lavenders are represented by several penstemons (*Penstemon* spp.), and an array of sages (*Salvia* spp.). Pretty but prickly are colorful hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus coccineus*), cholla cactus species (*Cylindropuntia* spp.), prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia littoralis*), and beavertail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris*). Evening primrose (*Oenothera* spp.), phlox species (*Leptosiphon* spp.), yucca (*Hesperoyucca* and *Yucca* spp.) and agave (*Agave* spp.) are quite dramatic even if they are dressed "only" in white blossoms!



Conejo buckwheat (*Eriogonum crocatum*), phlox species (*Leptosiphon* spp.), blue curls (*Trichostema lanatum*) a sage relatives. Photos courtesy of CalBG.

San Diego County

Manzanitas and ceanothus species have faded from their bloom in most regions of Southern California below 3500 feet. In San Diego county's Laguna Mountains, however, manzanitas and ceanothus are still putting on a spectacular show especially along the [Garnet Peak Loop trail](#). I'll add a note that the Pacific Crest Trail connects here in the Laguna Mountains as well. One scenic route to arriving to the Garnet Peak Loop trail is travelling along SR76 south from Palomar Mountain. Flowers along the south side of Palomar are mostly done. Clearly spring is mostly over there. However, starting in Santa Ysabel Valley to Julian, spring is still going full blast. Somehow the blue chaparral whitethorn is still blooming gangbusters there. Fields of cream cups (*Platystemon californicus*) and lupine (*Lupinus* spp.) are painting the landscape with pastel colors. The yellow lupine or California golden banner (*Thermopsis californica*) was in bloom in a field just before Julian and just past Julian, the white palmer's ceanothus (*Ceanothus palmeri*) is in glorious full bloom. There were a few patches of goldfields just above Lake Cuyamaca, and some stunning areas of redbuds along Sunrise Highway. Also spotted is serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*) in full bloom near the beginning of Garnet Peak Trail at Sunrise Highway. One month ago, there were essentially no flowers in this area, and very little annual germination. An amazing transformation occurred in the last month, to have tons of flowers here! On the Garnet Peak trail, the star bloomers were cupped leaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus perplexans*) and chaparral whitethorn (*Ceanothus leucodermis*) producing slopes of white from the cupped leaf ceanothus and rivers of blue from whitethorn ceanothus. Close to Garnet Peak, pink bracted manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pringlei*), with its deep pink flowers, joined the show. There were also good patches of Eastwood manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa*) in bloom in several places along this route. Garnet Peak is covered with rocky slopes of Laguna Mountain goldenbush (*Ericameria cuneata* var. *microcephala*), an endemic species to this area. There are abundant annuals and perennials in places. Close to the trailhead there were baby blue eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*), strigose lotus (*Acmispon strigosus*), coastal gilia (*Gilia diegensis*), and Washoe phacelia (*Phacelia curvipes*), among others. Garnet Peak was beautiful now, so make the trip soon.



Eastwood manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa*), cup-leaved ceanothus (*Ceanothus perplexans*), view of Garnet Peak, *Phacelia* sp., river of chaparral whitethorn (*Ceanothus leucodermis*), and serviceberry (*Amelanchier* sp.) Photos by Don Vogt.

Inland Empire

The [La Alba Trail along the Murrieta Hogbacks](#) runs adjacent to the Santa Rosa Plateau. Unlike the relatively easy to moderate trails of the Plateau, the La Alba hiking loop is more challenging, but rewards with the iconic sights, sounds and fragrance of pristine coastal sage scrub, one of the most cherished plant communities in California. Everything is in full bloom. Keystone species like black sage (*Salvia mellifera*) California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*) are in prolific bloom and attracting pollinators. Nice pockets of wildflowers include Mariposa lily (*Calochortus* sp.), baby blue eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*), goldfields (*Lasthenia californica*), and phacelia (*Phacelia* spp.). It is also a habitat that is popular for birders.



Black sage (*Savia mellifera*) and the Hogbacks, splendid mariposa lily (*Calochortus splendens*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*). Photos by Emily Sluiman.

San Bernardino Mountains

I am pleased to report that Spring has finally sprung here at the Oak Glen Preserve! [The Southern California Montane Botanic Garden on the Oak Glen Preserve](#) is situated at an elevation of 4,800 feet in the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains, so spring arrives later here than elsewhere in the So Cal valleys. The Botanic Garden features more than 150 native wildflowers of the Southern California mountains, with several venues, such as Ruth's Butterfly Garden and Hummingbird Hill, with species selected for their attraction to butterflies and moths and hummingbirds, respectively. But the real attraction for wildflower enthusiasts is the Artist's Palette—a six-acre hillside that used to be covered with weeds is now covered with native wildflowers. A prominent feature is "Sendero del Sol"—the Trail of the Sun—highlighting a "sun" with 100-foot long white-yellow rays composed of fringed linanthus (*Linanthus dianthiiflorus*), fiddlenecks (*Amsinckia* sp.), tidy-tips (*Layia platyglossa*), sun cups (*Camissoniopsis* spp.) and popcorn flowers (*Plagiobothrys* sp.), surrounded by a "sky" of blue and purple flowers comprised of phacelias (*Phacelia* spp.), baby blue eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*), and purple owl's clover (*Castilleja exserta*). The Hummingbird Hill venue is also looking good in early bloom with Eaton's firecracker (*Penstemon eatonii*), scarlet bugler (*Penstemon centranthifolius*) and fuchsia-flowered gooseberry (*Ribes speciosum*) in good show. Enjoy a walk through the garden, followed by a cold glass of apple cider and a slice of apple pie! Saturday is the Art and Nature Festival. Details below in EVENTS section.



Scenes from Southern California Montane Botanic Garden wildflower display. Photo by Tim Krantz.

That's it for this week. Look for our next report on Friday, May 23rd and check back each week for the most up-to-date information on Southern California wildflower regions to visit!

Wild Flower & Native Plant Events Across SoCal

Theodore Payne Foundation

🌸 Buzz & Bloom: Getting to Know California Native Bees with Maryanne Pittman | May 22 | 9 AM

May 20th is World Bee Day! Celebrate with us the diversity and ecological importance of California's busiest pollinators! This class combines indoor learning with time for observation in the Theodore Payne Foundation's beautiful gardens! Please come prepared with water, sun protection, and closed-toe shoes. [Sign up here](#).

CNPS San Gabriel Mountains Chapter

🌸 Field Trip on the Summitridge Park Trail in Diamond Bar | May 17 | 8 AM

Explore a beautiful Oak/Sycamore riparian woodland and a sagebrush scrub with Cynthia Robin Smith. Meet at the [Summitridge Park trailhead](#), Diamond Bar Center, 1600 Grand Avenue Diamond Bar, CA 91765. When entering the grounds for the center, stay to the left. Parking is free. Contact: info@cnps-sgm.org

South Pasadena Nature Park

🌸 South Pasadena Nature Park Monthly Volunteer Day | May 17 | 9 AM – 12 PM

Support Native Habitat in South Pasadena at the South Pasadena Nature Park's monthly Volunteer Day. Come to pull, bash, curse, chop and behead weeds, pick up litter, and enjoy the park. [Find more information here](#).

Southern California Montane Botanic Garden on the Oak Glen Preserve

🌸 The Wildlands Conservancy's Arts and Nature Festival | May 17 | 9 AM – 3:30 PM

[Visit their website for more information](#).