

WILD FLOWER HOTLINE

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Weekly Updates March–May

Theodore Payne Foundation's Wild Flower Hotline is made possible by [donations](#), and [sponsorships](#). 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 15, 2026

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.

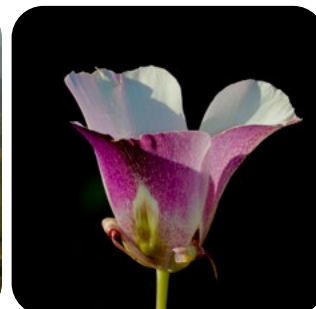
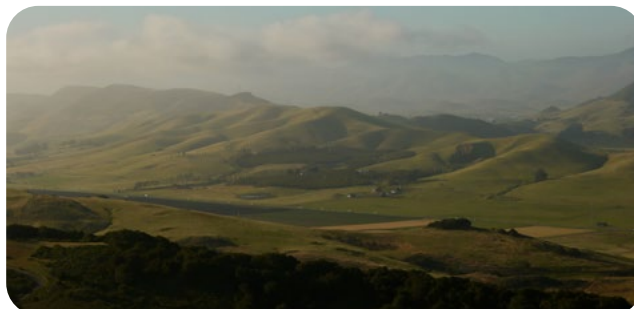
PLEASE ALWAYS

- ✿ Stay on designated trails.
- ✿ Do not collect or step on wildflowers.
- ✿ Obey posted closures and warnings
- ✿ Share the trails; be respectful of others.
- ✿ Leave no trace.
- ✿ Visit on weekdays and/or off-peak hours, if possible.

Thank you to our 2026 sponsors, Alonzo Wickers and [Cuyama Buckhorn](#).

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

Hiking in the lush green landscape of [Irish Hills Natural Reserve](#) in San Luis Obispo, one might think they are in Ireland, but the surrounding flora is definitely California with a few species, like the now fruiting Bishop manzanita (*Arctostaphylos obispoensis*), being endemic to the central coast ranges including San Luis Obispo county. Other iconic California shrubs like chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) are also prominent along the trails. Trekking the Bog Thistle Creek, and the Irish Hills Loop trails, hikers will see lots of geophytes growing amongst the still green grasses and herbs. Golden stars (*Bloomeria crocea*), fairy lantern (*Calochortus albus*), clay Mariposa lily (*Calochortus agrillosus*), and soap plant (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum* var. *divaricatum*) are stand outs. Buttercup (*Ranunculus californica*), blue eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*) is in bloom in spotty locations as well.



SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS AND FOOTHILLS

At [Descanso Gardens](#), the riparian area in the Natives Garden display draws visitors' attention to a splendid patch of blue globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), and some elegant western columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*), mingled with goldenrod (*Solidago* sp.), monkeyflower (*Diplacus* sp.), and Hooker's evening primrose (*Oenothera elata* ssp. *hookeri*). Showy penstemon (*Penstemon spectabilis*) and California ladies' tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*) are dressing up the roadway edges and the nearby buckeye trees (*Aesculus californica*) are at the peak bloom. The Desert Garden features Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), fairy duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*), and the subtle, ghostly gray-and-blue desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), all flowering like mad. Nearby, the Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*) plot is still going strong—much taller, and more densely flowered than the garden staff has seen in years. Walk the shady forest paths of the Oak Arboretum to see a lush meadow of colorful wildflowers including pink, white, and magenta elegant clarkia (*Clarkia unguiculata*), bluebells (*Phacelia campanularia*), purple pagodas (*Collinsia heterophylla*), bird's-eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*), and golden orange California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*).



Bird's-eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*), western columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*), California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*).
Photos by Michael Wall.

There are many reasons to visit the [Theodore Payne Foundation](#), but a trip should always include strolling and exploring the gardens and landscape displays surrounding the administrative, education or nursery facilities. Every season, every visit, there is something new in bloom or in fruit. New in explosive flower this month, are the desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) and their colorful cultivated varieties, and the ubiquitous California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Both these species draw in abundant and diverse pollinators that are fascinating to watch and photograph. Other showy plants seen throughout the gardens include the spectacularly photogenic Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*), many, many fragrant perennial sages (*Salvia* spp.) and the cheery, sun loving, desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*).





Desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) with prolific blooms, white sage (*Salvia apiana*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), and ocellated Humbolt Lily (*Lilium humboldtii* ssp. *ocellatum*) continuing to bloom. Photos by Hannah Perez.

This week at the [California Botanic Garden](#), large patches of adorable centaury (*Zeltnera venusta*) flowers have appeared throughout open spaces in the California Plant Communities display area. These flowers are a “must-see” just because they are so cute and colorful! A couple of weeks ago, we spoke of the California buckeye trees (*Aeschylus californica*), always coming into flower around Mother’s Day. Well, all the buckeyes in the garden are now in peak bloom just in time to take mom on an outing to the garden to admire their fragrant blossoms on Sunday, Mother’s Day. Other attractions include the golden currants (*Ribes aureum*) which are now in full fruit. The abundant, juicy, orange berries provide tasty snacks for all sorts of wildlife. There are a few Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) as well as several chaparral yuccas (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*), flowering in the desert section of the California Plant Communities both with magnificent spikes of large cream-colored flowers!



Charming centaury (*Zeltnera venusta*), golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*). Photos courtesy of CalBG.

RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Something very unusual has been spotted on the Black Mountain Trail in the San Jacinto Mountains. It is the uncommonly seen California ground cone (*Kopsiopsis strobilacea*). Ground cones, which are root parasites on chaparral shrubs like manzanita, look very much like odd fleshy conifer cones. The ones seen on this trail

are so full of flowers that it is a beacon of pink color from a distance, at least to a plant enthusiast! The trail also had very large, white-veined wintergreen (*Pyrola picta*) and little prince's pine (*Chimaphila menziesii*) growing with them. This trio of plants seen together is a treat for botanists. You must work hard to get a chance to spot these beauties as the trail is strenuous but well worth the effort.



California ground cone (*Kopsiopsis strobilacea*), white-veined wintergreen (*Pyrola picta*). Photos by Don Rideout.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

The Pacific Crest Trail ([PCT](#)) from [Barrel Springs](#), to [Warner Springs](#) has a great display of cacti intermingled with chaparral shrub species. Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) line the trail in poofs of white blossoms. Occupying spaces among them are the several colorful flowering cacti species looking like little jewels scattered in this unusual landscape. Other chaparral companions are found in the landscape and include globe mallow, (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), woolly blue curls (*Trichostema lanatum*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), goldenbush (*Ericameria* sp.), paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.) and golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*). Along the riparian ribbon, flowering trees include elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), willow (*Salix* sp.), and Western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*). A few annuals are still prospering. Look for red California bee plant (*Scrophularia californica*), blue larkspur (*Delphinium* sp.), and hot pink fringed spineflower (*Chorizanthe fimbriata*) among the drying grasses.



Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Photos by Emily Sluiman.

There is a flower-filled, delightful trip awaiting hikers at [Cuyamaca Rancho State Park](#) on the Japacha Fire Road, the West Mesa Trail, or the Arroyo Seco Trail. This area, at elevations of 4000 to 5000 feet, are in peak bloom now. The highlight by far was seeing hundreds of fairy lanterns (*Calochortus albus*) in bloom. Many of the plants are unusually large and with many flowers this year. The showiest plants in bloom are Palmer's ceanothus (*Ceanothus palmeri*), summer lupine (*Lupinus formosus*) and bush lupine (*Lupinus excubitus* var. *austromontanus*). Others include silver lotus (*Acmispon argophyllus*), San Diego pea (*Lathyrus vestitus* var. *alefeldii*), common phacelia (*Phacelia distans*), globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), baby stars (*Leptosiphon parviflorus*), cryptantha (*Cryptantha intermedia*) and summer snow (*Leptosiphon floribundus*). Summer snow was easily the most abundant and floriferous plant lining the trail with snow-white blossoms. There are three very abundant trifolium species as well; Indian clover (*Trifolium albopurpureum*), tree clover (*Trifolium ciliolatum*), and tomcat clover (*Trifolium willdenovii*).



White fairy lanterns (*Calochortus albus*), photo by Tom Chester. Palmer's ceanothus (*Ceanothus palmeri*), view from Japacha Fire Road, and summer snow (*Leptosiphon floribundus*), photos by Don Rideout.

URBAN LOS ANGELES REGION

The Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) has joined the flower show at Elizabeth Learning Center's Habitat Gardens! The Desert Garden delights with creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) and catclaw (*Senegalia greggii*), along with California barrel cactus (*Ferocactus cylindraceus*), Chuckwalla cholla (*Cylindropuntia chuckwallensis*), Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), silver puffs (*Uropappus lindleyi*),

turpentine bush (*Ericameria laricifolia*), climbing milkweed (*Funastrum cynanchoides* var. *hartwegii*), desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), desert wishbone bush (*Mirabilis laevis*), apricot mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), bladderpod (*Cleomella arborea*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), bird's eye gilia (*Gilia tricolor*), and fiveneedle pricklyleaf (*Thymophylla pentachaeta*). The Vernal Pools Habitat Garden keeps the show going with Baja California sage (*Salvia californica*), sacred thorn apple (*Datura wrightii*), male Encinitas baccharis (*Baccharis vanessae*), golden spined cereus (*Bergerocactus emoryi*), San Diego ceanothus (*Ceanothus cyaneus*), San Diego barrel cactus (*Ferocactus viridescens*), coastal cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*), chaparral prickly pear (*Opuntia oricola*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), Otay mesa mint (*Pogogyne nudiuscula*), woolly marbles (*Psilocarphus brevissimus*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), cliff spurge (*Euphorbia misera*), spineshrub (*Adolphia californica*), and Del Mar manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa* ssp. *crassifolia*).

Additional species in the Chaparral Habitat Garden include Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), San Luis mariposa lily (*Calochortus obispoensis*), butterfly mariposa lily (*Calochortus venustus*), California wild rose (*Rosa californica*), Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), Chinese houses (*Collinsia heterophylla*), fairy lantern (*Calochortus albus*), Orcutt's hazardia (*Hazardia orcuttii*), Peirson's morning glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*), Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*), San Clemente island brodiaea (*Brodiaea kinkiensis*), island ceanothus (*Ceanothus arboreus*), pink fairy duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), Santa Rosa Island sage (*Salvia brandegeei*), blue paloverde (*Parkinsonia florida*), red-skinned onion (*Allium haematochiton*), sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), and Santa Cruz Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum arborescens*). 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, contact George Nanoski, the Habitat Gardens coordinator via email: gtn5586@lausd.net. His conference period is 10:30am - 12:00noon on Monday/Thursday and 12:30pm - 2:00pm on Wednesday/Friday. Or a visit can be arranged after 3:30 when school is out on Fridays.



Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), San Clemente Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum giganteum* var. *formosum*), variegated dudleya (*Dudleya variegata*). Photos by George Nanoski.

That's it for this week.

Look for our next report on Friday, May 22nd 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

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY CHAPTERS

🌸 OC Chapter CNPS | May Events

Join OC CNPS for exciting workshops, programs, and field trips. [More info here.](#)

🌸 Riverside/San Bernardino Chapter CNPS | May 16 | 10 AM to 12 PM

In-Person Workshop! Learn to use the wonderful tools in the *free* Calflora, Calscape, and iNaturalist apps. [More info here.](#)

SOUTH PASADENA NATURE PARK

🌸 Friends of South Pasadena Nature Park Clean-up | May 16 | 9 AM to 12 PM

Join us to plant, remove weeds and litter, build paths, and enjoy the park. Come for the whole time, for an hour, or just stop by to say hello!

THEODORE PAYNE FOUNDATION

🌸 WORLD BEE DAY: Getting to Know California Native Bees | May 20 | 6 PM Online

In this class, we'll dive into the incredible world of California's cute and busy bees—exploring their lifecycles, nesting habits, and the unique relationships they share with our local flora. Which will you spot in your own home gardens? We'll learn tips about bee-friendly habitats – whether in a backyard, the park, or your balcony. [Sign up here.](#)