

Los Padres National Forest



Figueroa Mountain Wildflower Update **March 30, 2017**

Happy spring everyone!

I have good news and bad news. Which should I tell you about first? Okay, we'll start with the good news. More and more of the different wildflower varieties are proudly starting to display their beautiful spring colors. Now for the bad news.the California poppies, not so much. Due to the much needed rain that we have had on Figueroa Mountain, many think that this would bring a tremendous wildflower display. While this is true for some varieties, high volume of rainfall has a tendency to hinder others, such as the poppies and sky lupine. Along with wildflowers, comes lots of very tall and dense grasses during wet years. When wildflowers, such as poppies and lupine bloom on the mountains and hillsides that they share with these grasses, the grasses overtake the flowers. This limits the blooms and those that do manage to bloom in these areas, are covered by the tall grasses and since the poppies and lupine require lots of sun and cannot get it from the shadowing grasses, they are very short lived.

Please don't let this discourage you from visiting Figueroa Mountain. As I previously mentioned, there are other gorgeous varieties that are benefitting greatly from the incredible amount of rain and are ready to bring you a lovely show.

A friendly reminder before we begin. When you stop to look and take pictures of all the beauties, please make sure that you park on the shoulder of the road and not on the road itself. If there isn't a place to stop, find a turn-out and walk back to the area. Please do not block the road at any time as this will be enforced.

Let's get started!

Starting at the first cattle guard and continuing to the canopy area, shiny buttercups, blue dicks, delightful fiesta flowers, fiddlenecks, Johnny jump-ups, fillaree and miner's lettuce are in bloom. Enchanting Chinese houses, beautiful hummingbird sage, exquisite owl's clover and whimsical blow wives have joined the others. A few lupine were spotted, but not many. Within the canopy area, miniature lupine, bluedicks, fiesta flowers, Johnny jump-ups, buttercups and miner's lettuce can be found.

As you continue up the hill, beautiful California poppies are in bloom along the road and on the rocky hillsides. If you look up on Grass Mountain, notice that very little orange can be seen. As I mentioned earlier, the grasses are so tall, full and thick that the poppies are having a problem competing. Right before you get to the rusty gate, look to the right, tiny cream cups continue to bloom, along with fillaree and some poppies.

Other wildflowers to look for as you continue your uphill climb include, buttercups, poppies, miner's lettuce, fiesta flowers, mustard, golden yarrow, fiddleneck, fillaree, blue dicks, a few lupine, carpets of goldfields, stunning orange wall flowers. chalk dudleyas, shooting stars, and coreopsis. The Ceanothus is beginning to fade in this area, but blue-eyed grass, lomatium, bush lupine and charming mariposa lilies are joining the party.

At Vista Point (large gravel turnout about 11.4 miles from the bottom), the chocolate lilies were short lived, but fear not, they can be found at another location. Stay tuned. What you will see are goldfields, fillaree. blue-eyed grass, buttercups, lomatium and blue dicks. In the serpentine area across Vista Point and along the road up to the station, you'll see globe gilies, goldfields, shooting stars, lomatium, California poppies, buttercups, blue dicks, coreopsis, golden yarrow, blow wives and wild onions.

As you pass the station, the fields of shooting stars can still be seen, ranging in color from deep magenta to purple to the occasional white blooms. Buttercups and bush lupine can also be spotted here.

In the field to the right, before Tunnell Ranch Road, look for poppies, wall flowers and buttercups.

About a half mile further, on the infamous poppy hillside, the poppies and lupine are being taken over by a fast growing, introduced grass type weed known as golden top grass. While there are still poppies and lupine, they are going fast. While the poppies and sky lupine might not be doing well in this area, the bush lupine is stunning and getting even more so day by day. They can be seen along the road, as well as on the rocky hillsides. Don't forget to stop and smell these beauties. Their aroma is quite breathtaking. As you continue past the closed Lookout Road, look for California poppies, sky lupine and globe gillias

Continuing on Figueroa Mountain Road to the Davy Brown trailhead, poppies, Ceanothus, sky lupine, and purple nightshades can be found.

About one half mile further, beautiful shooting stars, lomatium and buttercups continue to show off. About ¼ mile further, in the fields adjacent to the large dirt turnout on the left, lovely chocolate lilies are scattered throughout and continue along the surrounding areas. Other flowers sharing these fields include, shooting stars, buttercups and lomatium. As you continue on Figueroa Mountain Road, look for goldfields, tidy tips, fillaree, sky lupine, golden yarrow and delightful red Indian paintbrush along the rocky areas.

Just beyond the gate at the entrance of Ranger Peak, look at the grassy area on the right and see adorable baby blue eyes peaking at you. As you continue going up the hill to Ranger Peak, more baby blue eyes are present.

From Ranger Peak to Cachuma Saddle, the beauties along this stretch are getting ready to impress you. Check out the bush poppies, California poppies, bush lupine, wild canyon peas, golden yarrow, and Indian paintbrush. The bush lupine is really beginning to put on a show as there are areas along this stretch that the bush lupine line the road on both sides. Within the next couple of weeks, they should be in full bloom and looking spectacular.

Sunset Valley refuses to be left behind. As you turn on Sunset Valley, look for fillaree, yellow poppies, popcorn flower, blue dicks, Ceanothus and purple nightshade. As you start going down the hill towards Davy Brown, the bush poppies are painting the hilltops in yellow. Along this stretch, you will find stinging lupine (so tempting to want to touch, but don't or you'll be sorry....ouch!), chia, prickly phlox, wild cucumber, Mexican elderberry, morning glories, milk thistle, clematis and globe gillias. From the Davy Brown Campground to NIRA Campground, you will see more yellow poppies, chia, sweet baby blue eyes and gorgeous Nuttles Larkspur, sky lupine, buttercups, coreopsis, morning glories, Chinese houses, bush poppies, prickly phlox and blue dicks.

When you return from Sunset Valley (since it dead ends at NIRA Campground) and come to the intersection of Sunset Valley Road/Happy Canyon Road and Figueroa Mountain Road, you will have to decide which direction to go. Because of the damage incurred to the dirt section of Happy Canyon Road by the heavy rains, it is recommended that only high clearance vehicles exit the mountain through Happy Canyon Road. People in low clearance vehicles are advised to turn around and exit the mountain via Figueroa Mountain Road.

If you choose to exit through Happy Canyon Road, look for stinging lupine on the disturbed, gravel hillsides on the left, along with purple nightshade. Also, making their presence, are poppies, royal lupine, purple sage, blue dicks, clematis, bush poppies, mustard, fiddleneck, vetch, bush lupine, fiesta flowers, canyon peas, prickly phlox, wild cucumber, Indian paintbrush, coreopsis, globe gillias, goldfields and mariposa lilies. As you pass the shooting area and start your descend down the hill, more mariposa lilies can be seen, along with poppies, Mexican elderberry, lomatium, shooting stars, morning glories, buttercups, Johnny jump-ups, fairy lanterns and blow wives.

I realize that everyone is wondering when the road will be fixed. Unfortunately, the answer is not a simple one. With the amount of damage that occurred forest wide to numerous roads due to the massive winter storms, it is very difficult to say when this road will be fixed. We apologize for any inconvenience. However, while this section might not be passable to many, keep in mind that the Figueroa side of the mountain will have other displays in the upcoming weeks.

That's all for this update. Look for our next wildflower update in two weeks. Until then, happy viewing! If you would like to be added to the Figueroa Wildflower Update email list, please contact Helen Tarbet by e-mail at htarbet@fs.fed.us.



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