

Los Padres National Forest



Figueroa Mountain Wildflower Update May 5, 2018

Happy May!

I think that we can all agree that this year hasn't been exactly a fabulous wildflower year. However, Figueroa Mountain certainly has been doing its best to give us a show with the little rain it received. While some of the flowers are done for the year, others are going through their last hurrah for the season, some are in their prime and the late varieties are starting to come up. The one thing they all have in common this season is that they are short lived. Of course, this is understandable with the minimal rainfall. But in spite of that, they are still trying to delight us with their beauty. If you plan on seeing these lovelies, make it soon, as they may not be around for much longer.

Let's go check them out, shall we?

Starting at the first cattle guard and continuing to the canopy area, much of the wildflowers are gone. However, the Chinese houses are most impressive, as they resemble pagodas in beautiful purple and white shades. Although they took over some of the grassy hillsides, beautiful fiesta flowers can still be found in some of the others. Hummingbird sage and golden yarrow is still present, along with a few blue dicks and royal lupine.

The canopy area is also starting to retire for the season. The grass has grown quite a bit, covering the few fiesta flowers that are still in bloom. Hummingbird sage can still be seen, along with fillaree and occasional blue dicks and buttercups, but they are going fast.

The poppies on Grass Mountain are done for the year as are the adorable cream cups right before the rusty iron gate. As you continue to climb the hill, look for jimson weed with its lovely large white flowers blooming along the road. California poppies are found on the rocky hillsides along with a prickly phlox. Also look for fillaree, occasional blue dicks, sky lupine, lomatium, golden yarrow, buttercups, buckwheat, wall flowers, mustard, blow-wives, some shooting stars, a few coreopsis, charming Dudley on the rocky hillsides and stunning displays of Catalina mariposa lilies in the grassy fields. Look for Chinese houses and purple wild onions at the last turn before Vista Point.

At Vista Point (large gravel turnout about 11.4 miles from the bottom), the few wildflowers that were there two weeks ago are pretty much gone. There are still a few goldfields and fillaree, but everything else is preparing for next year. Across from Vista Point, look for some poppies, golden yarrow, buckwheat, blue dicks and fillaree.

As you pass the station, the fields of shooting stars have all gone to seed.

The field before Tunnell Road is now hosting charming orange wall flowers, along with fillaree and wild onions. There aren't as many as other years, but none the less, they are still quite lovely to look at.

About a half mile further, the infamous poppy hillside has decided that it won't be left behind. There are more poppies this week than in weeks past along with caterpillar Phacelias. Although it is not actually carpeting the hillside as we are so accustomed to seeing, there are quite a few in bloom and looking quite lovely. The bush lupine is also showing off more and more.

Continuing on this stretch to the Figueroa Campground, more poppies can be seen, as well as bush lupine. You will notice poppies are blooming on Lookout Road, however, due to hazard trees the road is closed to the public for safety reasons, so please stay out.

From the Figueroa Campground to the Davy Brown Trailhead, look for poppies, sky lupine, bush lupine, chia, fiddleneck and purple nightshade.

The fields about a quarter to a half mile beyond the trailhead that earlier had shooting stars, buttercups and chocolate lilies have gone to seed in this area, but as you continue on your wildflower excursion along this stretch, look for gorgeous sky and royal lupine, a couple of fields of goldfields and tidy tips and exquisite red Indian paintbrush. Fuchsia-flowering gooseberries are also in bloom. Keep your eyes open for these maroon colored beauties!

As you enter Ranger Peak, the sweet baby blue eyes are gone from the entrance, but can still be found halfway through in the shaded areas, along with fiddleneck, bush lupine, sky lupine, common phacelias, purple nightshade and poppies.

Ranger Peak to Cachuma is looking lovely. There are more bush poppies and bush lupine in bloom. Along with these two beauties, eye catching sticky leaf monkey flower has joined the party. Also look for California poppies, caterpillar phacelias, scarlet buglers, purple nightshade, chia, Mexican elderberry, purple nightshade and Indian paintbrush.

Sunset Valley is quite colorful. Aside of bush poppies, prickly phlox and bush lupine. Small hillside of the small yellow California poppies are still in bloom, along with Mexican Elderberry, purple nightshade, fiesta flowers, morning glories, milk thistle, scarlet bugler, fiddleneck, blue dicks, golden yarrow, popcorn flower, chia, baby blue eyes, sticky leaf monkey flowers, buckwheat, wild cucumbers and the beginning of clarkias and Nuttles-larkspur. You will also find some adorable, bright yellow seep spring monkey flowers at the creek crossings.

Happy Canyon, like Sunset Valley is pretty awesome. As you head down the hill, look for California poppies, bush poppies, royal lupine, spiny lupine, clematis, Mexican Elderberry, bush lupine, vetch, wild canyon peas, wild roses, sticky leaf monkey flowers, fields of fiesta flowers, Chinese houses, common and caterpillar phacelias, Indian paintbrush (in the rocky areas), prickly phlox, coreopsis, milk thistle, blue dicks and mariposa lilies dancing within the tall grassy fields. Butter lupine is also starting to bloom along this area.

In the rocky slopes to the left, beyond the shooting area as you continue down the hill, look for mariposa lilies, stunning cactus flowers, poppies, blue-eyed grass, lomatium, shooting stars, blue dicks, caterpillar phacelias, purple nightshade, fiesta flowers, prickly phlox, deer vetch, wild canyon peas and exquisite fairy lanterns.

A reminder to all wildflower viewers.....when stopping to take pictures or to take a hike, please do not block the road at any time nor double park. As you all know, this is a hazard and makes it impossible for an emergency vehicle to get through if their assistance were required.

That's all for this update. It's looking like there might be enough flowers for one more update, so look for the next one 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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