

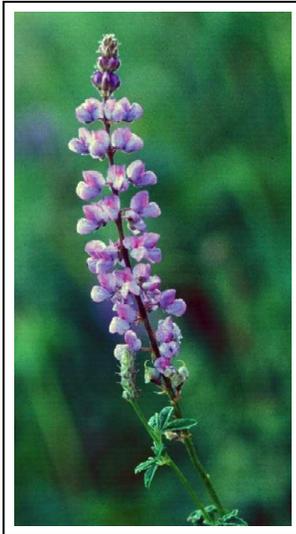
## BIGHORN NATIONAL FOREST

### MOUNTAIN MEADOW WILDFLOWERS

Probably the best month to view the wildflowers in the Bighorn Mountains is the month of June when the mountain meadows virtually explode with the color and fresh perfume of native flowering plants. Many plants bloom following snow melt, produce seeds for next year's crop and then die. Others stay green and retain their flower throughout most of the summer season. The following species are common to the Burgess Junction area meadows, and are only some of the wondrous varieties on the Bighorn.

#### Silvery Lupine (*Lupinus argenteus*)

Dense heads of blue to purplish, pea-like flowers grow on long stalks. Linear leaves fan out from a central node like the palm of a hand. Found in mountain meadows and on slopes. Primary flowering season is June through August. The name lupine came from the Latin



word lupus meaning wolf, because it was once thought that lupines robbed the soil of nutrients. It is now known that bacteria on root nodules take nitrogen from the air and convert it to plant food, actually enriching the soil. Mice eat the roots and seeds, bear consume the seeds, pods, and roots, and elk relish the flowers and seedpods.

#### Sego Lily (*Calochortus gunnisonii*)



Also called "Mariposa Lily." A white, tulip like flower with a purple band at the base of the petal. First flowers appear in June, about the time young golden eagles start to feather out and prairie falcons leave the nest. The bulbous root is sweet and is

nutritious. Bears and rodents feed on the roots; the seedpods are readily devoured by domestic sheep and probably bighorn sheep when green.

#### Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja species*)



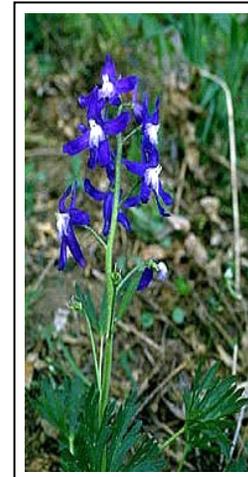
The name comes from its resemblance to a ragged brush dipped in paint. They come in various colors—white, yellow, pink,



orange and red. Spleenleaf Indian Paintbrush (*C. rhexifolia*), a pinkish-red one occurs in our mountain meadows from June through August. A creamy yellow variety, sulfur Paintbrush (*C. sulphurea*) blooms in June and July. The

bracts and upper leaves provide the color in this plant rather than the actual flower, which is rather dull. This plant is semi parasitic. The roots penetrate tissues of nearby plants, stealing part of their food. Wyoming Paintbrush (*C. linariaefolia*) is the state flower of Wyoming and is red in color.

#### Larkspur (*Delphinium bicolor*)



Rich blue-purple flowers and deeply lobed geranium like leaves distinguish this plant. Larkspur ranges from the low valleys to high mountains, blooming April to July. The beautiful flower belies the danger of this plant, which harbors a poisonous alkaloid. The ingestion of flowering larkspur is one of the leading causes of cattle

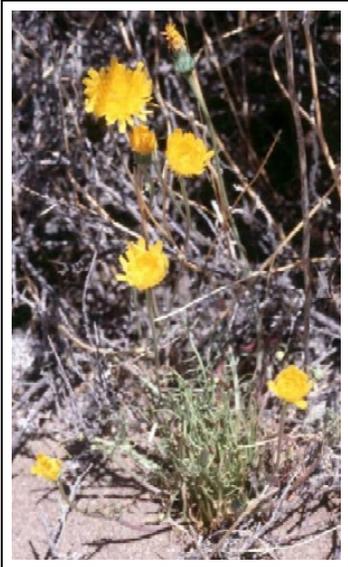
death on National Forest lands, although domestic sheep are not adversely affected.

### Bighorn National Forest

Tongue Ranger District: (307)674-2600  
Powder River Ranger District: (307) 684-7806  
Medicine Wheel Ranger District: (307) 765-4435

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### False Dandelion (*Agoseris glauca*)



Flower is similar in appearance to the common dandelion, with a single flat yellow flower head on a long stalk. It begins flowering in May and continues through August at higher elevations. A milky juice appears when the stem is broken. Native Americans chewed the dried juices as gum.

### Forget-me-not (*Myosotis alpestris*)



These delicate sky-blue flowers with yellow centers are truly unforgettable. It occurs in dense flower clusters, sometimes more than a foot across. Blooms first appear in late June when cow elk are starting their journey to higher summer ranges with young calves. They persist through early August. The name *Myosotis* comes from two Latin words meaning mouse ears, which the small, hairy leaves resemble.

### Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*)



Also known as "Old Man's Whiskers", flowers are terminal with one to nine flowers in a cyme.

The calyx is reddish-purple to pink or yellow in color. The 5 petals are light yellow, white, pink, or red-purple tinged. When in bloom, the flowers arch downward, but as the fruits mature, the flower stands up, the fruits become elongated, feathery achenes, giving the appearance of smoking. Prairie smoke is found in moist sagebrush plains and foothills, to subalpine ridges and talus slopes. Native Americans boiled the roots to make a tea.

### Sticky Geranium (*Geranium viscosissimum*)



The plant gets its name from the sticky hairs that blanket the stem and leaves. Flowers are a rose-purple color with dark streaks through the petals. Blooms are prominent in open meadows May through July with the peak occurring just about the time that young mountain

bluebirds are leaving their nest and taking wing. It's a major food item for elk, moose, and deer.

### Arrowleaf Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*)



Bright yellow with leaves shaped like arrow heads. They appear in late spring and continue blooming through the fall.

### American Bistort (*Polygonum bistortoides*)

A plume of tiny white flowers, this bloom first makes its appearance in early July, in high mountain meadows through August. The hefty rootstalks are eaten by bear and rodents alike. Deer and elk forage on the leaves and stalks. North American Indians used the root in soups and stews.



### Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

A flat-topped plant bearing many tiny white flowers in an umbrella like cluster. Feathery fern-like leaves send a strong herbal odor through the air when crushed. First flowers in May, still blooming in September. Grows from low valleys to well above timberline.



Achillea is the name given to the plant used to minister the wounds of Achilles soldiers.