



## **Figueroa Mountain Wildflower Update for 2020**

### **April 3, 2020**

Greetings everyone!

We hope all of you are staying healthy and safe during this trying time.

Our apologies for not submitting a wildflower update sooner, however, it has been difficult for a number of reasons. First of all, the wildflowers this year are quite scarce, giving me very little to write about. Due to the very dry winter we had, not many of the plants made it. Those that did, have taken advantage of the little moisture we had this winter and many came out early in an effort to bloom, be pollinated and scatter their seeds for next year's flowers before they no longer could. Although we've received quite a bit of rain in the last couple of weeks, it will not help this year's blooms. What the rain is helping considerably are the grasses. Unfortunately, with the grasses growing so tall, they are hiding the few flowers which did make it.

Secondly, COVID-19 has put a damper on pretty much everything, including the wildflower program. As with most people, we are sheltering in place and unable to do future reports this season. However, we are in the process of putting together a Facebook presentation on our local wildflowers in general, perhaps not this year's wildflowers, but wildflowers that we have had throughout the years and hope to have for many years to come as the weather permits. Please join the Los Padres National Forest Facebook page and once we complete this project and post it, all will be able to see it.

So...let's start this very short Figueroa Wildflower update, as there is very little to share. Please keep in mind that it will not be in the same format as it normally is as many of the flowers came up early, have been short-lived and the few that are there are scattered throughout the mountain.

Let's start by saying that this is definitely not a poppy year. There are few patches on the mountain and those patches are very small. Grass Mountain is covered in grass and just a scattering of a poppies here and there. This year is mostly a lupine year. While carpets of sky lupine can be found throughout Figueroa, the lupine are super small this year. While on a normal year a lupine can be 6 to 8 inches tall, this year they are between 2 and 3 inches. I also couldn't smell their fabulous aroma that they are so known for. The other issue is that the grasses are very tall and towering over the lupine, making them hard to see.

The shooting stars, Johnny jump-ups, buttercups, baby blue eyes, milkmaids and goldfields all bloomed early this year and were very short lived. Other early blooms that I noticed in late January and early February included fuchsia flowering gooseberries, lomatium, cream cups, blue dicks and Ceanothus. A few weeks later they had gone to seed.

Some of the wildflowers that I never saw materialize this year included chocolate lilies. I can normally see the plant starting to come up in February, but it wasn't the case this year. In fact, even as late as the first week of March, the plants had not come up.

Based on reports that I have received from some of our essential employees, some of the flowers that they recently spotted along the stretch between Ranger Peak and Cachuma Saddle included some bush poppies, bush lupine, a few California poppies, Indian paintbrush, sticky monkey flowers and a couple of purple nightshade. While some of these flowers were blooming, my sources also said that all the flowers were scarce.

The largest display of poppies that I found at the beginning of March was at the Chicken Springs area. There was a fire in this area last year. Between the nutrients that the ashes provide and the seeping water from the spring, the California poppies did better here than in any other place on the mountain. A week ago I heard from a visitor who went to this area and found many poppies still in bloom. I will be posting his pictures on the Los Padres National Forest Facebook page in the next couple of days. If anybody reading this has visited any area within the Los Padres or anywhere else and has nice pictures that they would like to share, please send them to the email on the next paragraph and I can post them on our Facebook page. Please write me a note stating that you are okay with the pictures being posted and, of course, you will get the credit. Since many people are not able to get out and enjoy the beautiful wildflowers due to this quarantine, it will be nice for them to see your beautiful flower pictures.

I'm afraid that is all that I have to report. Being that I am sheltering in place, I won't be able to put out another update this season, but based on what I saw personally and what my essential coworkers have reported, there is very little to write about. With this said, let's hope that next year will be a better wildflower season and that we can return to our regular way of living soon. If you have any questions, please contact Helen Tarbet at [helen.tarbet@usda.gov](mailto:helen.tarbet@usda.gov).

Please stay healthy and safe.



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