

# Wildflowers of the Shasta-Trinity

Shasta-Trinity National Forest



A splash of red brightens a drab and dusty slope. A sweet smell drifts down canyon on breezes from the shaded depths of a stream. Sunny alpine meadows dance with blue. Wildflowers ranging from the showy and outrageous to the small and delicate are everywhere.

The Shasta-Trinity National Forest sits astride four major geographic and botanic regions: the Coast Range, Cascade Mountains, High Desert and the Central Valley. Each region has its own unique plant life and they all are found together

on this forest. The variety is amazing and, depending upon the elevation, wildflowers can be seen from late January through mid-November. This Recreation Opportunity Guide hardly begins to touch upon the variety but will provide some basic information about some of the more common wildflowers found on this forest. Also, please don't pick wildflowers. Take pictures instead and leave the flowers for others to enjoy.

## Plants with reddish flowers



**Indian Pink**  
*Silene californica*

This is a strikingly red wildflower found on dry brushy or wooded slopes in the spring. Its petals look as though they've been trimmed on the ends with pinking shears. Native Americans and early pioneers used it to make a tea which was taken for aches and pains.

**Leopard Lily**  
*Lilium pardalinum*

This showy lily prefers wet places and lots of sunlight. It grows to five feet tall or more and can be covered with large, hanging, reddish-orange flowers with purple spots. Yellow anthers extend beyond the recurved petals helping to make this one of the most colorful flowers in the mountains.



**Columbine**  
*Aquilegia formosa*

This is another mountain wildflower that likes its feet wet. The flowers are a bright reddish-orange and yellow, and because of the way they grow, look almost like they're inside out. This plant can grow to 2½ feet tall and has long been valued for medicinal purposes.

**Cobra Plant**  
*Darlingtonia californica*

This is one of the most unusual plants on the Shasta-Trinity. It thrives in open meadows and along streams at elevations between 2500' and 5000'. It is called "cobra plant" because of the way the hood recurves and the flags hang down from the opening. The plant is hollow inside and the lower part of the stem is filled with water. Insects crawl into the opening and down the stem. Stiff, downward-growing hairs prevent the insects from climbing back up and they eventually drown. This rich "soup" of decomposing insects is what the plant feeds on. The dark purple to red flowers are borne on long stalks that tower over the plant. The entire plant can be up to 2' tall.



**Indian Paintbrush**  
*Castilleja* species



There are several varieties of paintbrush at different elevations throughout the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Most typically, the plant grows to 2' in height in a variety of habitats: in damp meadows, on dry, open slopes and along the banks of streams. Its many red bracts surround small, obscure greenish flowers and give the plant the appearance of a paint brush, hence its common name. There are greenish, yellowish and even soft purple paintbrushes.

**Other common plants that have flowers tending toward red and orange** are scarlet gilia or skyrocket, firecracker flowers, spice bush, snowplants (a beautiful, bright red mycotroph), scarlet fritillary, Humboldt lily, showy thistle, roseroot, wild ginger, and Indian warrior.

## Plants with white to yellow flowers



**Western Azalea**  
*Rhododendron occidentale*

Azalea is one of the most beautiful wildflowers on the Shasta-Trinity. Azaleas grow in thickets and are found at mid-elevations along streams, lakes and meadows. The shrubs can be up to 10 feet tall and covered in July with fragrant white, yellow or pinkish flowers. This shrub is poisonous to livestock.

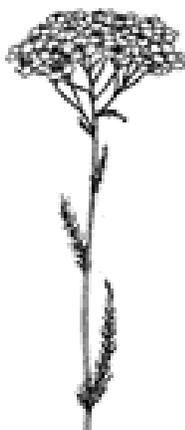


**Buttercup**  
*Ranunculus* spp.

The buttercup is one of the earliest bloomers on the Shasta-Trinity. Different species grow in wet and on drier slopes. The flowers are numerous on plants up to 18" tall and a brilliant yellow, looking almost waxy in the sunlight. The seeds of this spring flower were eaten by the California Indians.

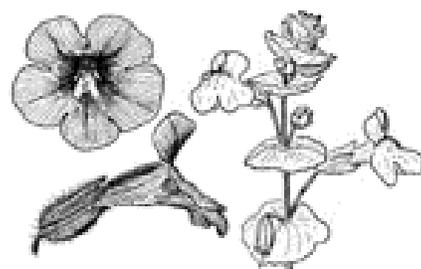
**Yarrow**  
*Achillea millefolium*

This 8" - 30" tall, aromatic plant is found on open slopes and in meadows. The flat-topped clusters of flowers are actually an aggregate of individual heads. Each head is a composite of white ray and yellow disc flowers. The leaves, steeped in hot water, were used by Native Americans and early settlers to stop bleeding in cuts and wounds.



**Common Monkeyflower**  
*Mimulus guttatus*

There are several species of monkeyflower but the one most readily identifiable is the common monkeyflower that grows in wet areas alongside roads on the Shasta-Trinity, especially at lower elevations in the early spring. Stalks of this plant can grow up to 24" tall and loaded with bright yellow flowers. Red spots are scattered on the lower petal and two hairy ridges close the throat of the flower. Different Monkeyflower species range in color from yellow to brilliant magenta and in size from the giant Monkeyflower to a tiny magenta version that grows at high elevations... the entire plant smaller than a dime.



**Sulphur Buckwheat**  
*Eriogonum umbellatum*

This is a somewhat woody plant that favors open, dry and rocky slopes at higher elevations. The flowers are a bright yellow and typically form loose balls at the tops of long stalks. The leaves of this plant are thick around the base of the stem, green above and a woolly -white beneath. There are many species of buckwheat on the Shasta-Trinity and the flowers vary from white to yellow to deep red.

**Mountain Violet**  
*Viola purpurea*

Look for this beautiful little violet in late spring and early summer at different elevations. It likes dry, open meadows and hillsides. The plant rarely exceeds 1 foot in height. Flowers are a brilliant yellow with purple veins on the lower three petals. The backs of the upper petals are purple. Another common violet is Shelton's or wood violet. Wood violets are usually solitary and their leaves are deeply cleft.

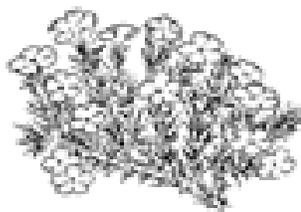


**Mule's Ears**  
*Wyethia species*

Mule's ears are a fairly common sight growing on open, sunny slopes along roads in the Shasta-Trinity. The leaves of this plant resemble the ears of mules, hence the name, and crowd the plant at ground level. They grow upright to 2 feet tall. The flowers are large, up to 4" across and are a beautiful, rich yellow.

**Other white to yellow flowers to look for include** yellow lupine, Bigelow's sneezeweed, common madia, heartleaf arnica, resinweed, California coneflowers, blazing stars, balsamroot, salsify, yellow fawn lilies, California poppies, bush poppies, corn lilies, beargrass, snowdrop bush, mock orange, and Shasta daisy. Shasta daisy is not native, but is widely naturalized in California.

## Plants with purple to pink flowers



**Spreading Phlox**  
*Phlox diffusa*

This is a beautiful and very fragrant plant that forms low, woody mounds in open, sunny, rocky and dry areas. Clumps of flowers can be up to 2' across and are quite striking. The

flowers start out a beautiful, rich rose pink, turning a faded bluish-white as they age.



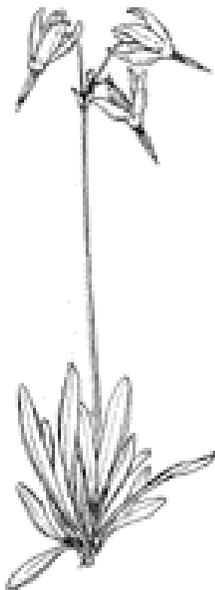
**Mountain Pennyroyal**  
*Monardella odoratissima*

This is a plant that likes dry, open and rocky slopes and ridges. It has several stems up to a foot tall topped with heads of small lavender to pale pinkish-purple flowers. When crushed, the leaves give off a delightful minty smell. Tea can be made from the blossoms, leaves and stems.

### Shooting Stars

*Dodecatheon hendersonii*

This is one of the earliest spring wildflowers, often blooming in February at the lower elevations of the Shasta-Trinity. The flowering stalks can be up to a foot tall. Henderson's shooting star prefers dry, sunny slopes. Jeffrey's shooting star is an alpine plant that likes its feet in the water, preferring wet meadows and streambanks. The flower is a rich lavender to rose color that has a band of maroon around its base and a striking yellow "nose." It is very fragrant.



### Fireweed

*Chamerion angustifolium*

Fireweed can grow up to 5 or more feet tall, with long flowering stalks at the top. Each flowering spike will have dozens of beautiful purple flowers that open progressively throughout the flowering season. It prefers damp slopes and meadows and is often one of the first species to invade an area after a wildland fire.



### Bleeding Heart

*Dicentra formosa*

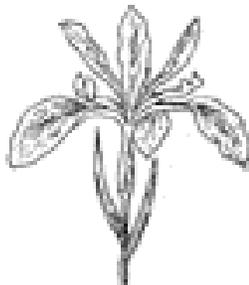
Bleeding hearts are a long time favorite with wild flower enthusiasts. You can find them in damp, shaded places throughout much of the Shasta-Trinity. They especially like stream banks. The plants can be a foot or more tall with lots of rose-purple heart-shaped flowers on tall stalks. The leaves are a rich green and are almost fern-like.



### Mountain Iris

*Iris tenuissima*

Iris are common throughout the Shasta-Trinity at mid-elevations on dry slopes among pines and firs. Flowers range from yellowish white to deep purple. The narrow leaves are tough and leathery, growing in a basal tuft. Flowers are at ground level or on upright stalks to a foot tall.



### Mountain Pride

*Penstemon newberryi*

Also known as a 'beardtongue,' this gorgeous plant is a common sight at mid to higher elevations. It grows profusely on dry, open and rocky slopes and outcrops in full sun. The striking flowers are an iridescent rose-purple and are thick along stalks that grow up to one foot long. There are many other penstemon that flourish on the Shasta-Trinity such as the white and red hot rock beardtongue, and the beautiful, deep purple whorled penstemon that grows in the high country.

**Other pink to purple flowers to look for...** monkshoods, California-lilac, elegant brodiaea, heather, manzanita, wild onion, dogbane, lewisia, checker mallow, foxgloves (not native, but naturalized) and ookow.

## Plants with blue flowers



**Lupine**  
*Lupinus* species

There are many different lupines growing on the Shasta-Trinity, from the diminutive *Lupinus lyalli* that grows at higher elevations and is hardly bigger than a quarter to the beautiful bush lupines that grace the lower elevations and grow to 3 feet high. One of the more beautiful lupines is the valley sky lupine that grows in the foothills surrounding the upper Sacramento Valley. Not all lupines have blue flowers. Some are white or yellow.



**Mahala Mat (Squaw carpet)**  
*Ceanothus prostratus*

This ceanothus grows in thick, dense mats close to the ground favoring open, dry cutbanks or alongside trails. The leaves are about 1" long, thick, leathery, and prickly. The small flowers vary in color from pale to dark blue and grow in small globose clusters. There are several other species of ceanothus on the Shasta-Trinity; among them a large bush called "wild lilac" for its long clusters of bluish colored flowers.

**Hounds Tongue**  
*Cynoglossum grande*

Hounds tongue has pale blue flowers that sit atop stems that can reach 18" in height. The leaves are the thing that gives the plant its name. It is common throughout the Shasta-Trinity, growing in shaded areas from low to mid elevations. As the flowers mature they turn a deep purple. Hounds tongue is one of our earliest blooming spring wildflowers. Later in the season, the plant produces round nutlets covered with Velcro-like hooks.



**Blue Gentian**  
*Gentiana calycosa*

This iridescent blue gentian graces wet meadows at the higher elevations of the Shasta-Trinity and are an unexpected delight for the hiker. The flowers usually only grow to about 6" tall but form thick carpets in some areas. The name of the genus comes from King Gentius of Illyria, ruler of an ancient country on the Adriatic Sea who discovered medicinal properties in the plant.



Notes...

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**Additional references...**

"The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California," James Hickman, "Introduction to California Spring Wildflowers of the Foothills, Valleys, and Coast (revised edition)" by Phillip Munz, "A Flora of the Trinity Alps" by William Ferlatte, "California's Wild Gardens: A Guide to Favorite Botanical Sites" by Phyllis Faber, "Common Riparian Plants of California" by Phyllis Faber and Robert Holland, "California Forests and Woodlands: A Natural History" by Verna Johnston, "Flowers and Trees of the Trinity Alps: A Photographic Guide" by Alice Jones, "Illustrated Field Guide to Selected Rare Plants of Northern California" by Gary Nakamura and Julie Nelson, "Trees and Shrubs of California" by John Stuart and John