

Bald Mountain-Lookingglass Canyon/F.S. Road 64

Forest: Umatilla National Forest

District: Walla Walla Ranger District

Description: The Bald Mountain-Lookingglass Canyon area is a botanically unique area that offers ready access by vehicle, easy hiking or cross-country hikes over steep and challenging ground. Spanning an elevation range from 3600 feet at the bottom of Lookingglass Canyon to 5200 feet on Bald Mountain. The area is a mix of gently sloping grassy open bald areas that are usually quite moist in the late spring, stringers of conifers and a deep and spectacular canyon that invokes scenes from the Columbia River Gorge. Lookingglass Canyon features dry grassland benches, seeps, and a beautiful perennial stream with massive basalt outcroppings and cliffs. For those few adept at safely bushwhacking over difficult terrain it provides numerous botanical wonders.



Male Fern (*Dryopteris felix-mas*) - an uncommon and beautiful fern species in Lookingglass Canyon. Photo by Mark Darrach/Umatilla N.F.

Wildflower viewing: Early forays (May through early June) on open slopes will reveal numerous species of biscuitroot with *Lomatium ambiguum*, *Lomatium grayi*, *Lomatium macrocarpum* prominent. Other early bloomers as the snow recedes, include glacier lily (*Erythronium grandiflorum*), woodland star (*Lithophragma parviflorum*), blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), seep monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*), grass widow (*Olsynium douglasii inflatum*), paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.). By mid-June, open slopes host blooming balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*) fringed onion (*Allium fibrillum*), and larkspur (*Delphinium nuttalianum*). The best time to view wildflowers on Bald Mountain-Lookingglass Canyon is June through mid-July. A wide spectrum of colors awaits the wildflower enthusiast and photographer with the fluorescent red of scarlet gilia (*Ipomopsis aggregata*), the pink of wakerobin (*Clarkia pulchella*), the unusual salmon-colored flowers of grand collomia (*Collomia grandiflora*) the purples of the spectacular local endemic Blue Mountain penstemon (*Penstemon pennellianus*), the bluish purples of Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium pulcherrimum*), and the intoxicating aroma of the four-petal white blossoms of the shrub mock orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*) growing in talus and along Lookingglass Creek. Other white flowering shrubs include Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) and chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*). Growing in the rocks additional species of *Penstemon* likely to be encountered are hotrock beardtongue (*Penstemon deustus*), bush penstemon (*Penstemon fruticosus*) and cutleaf beardtongue (*Penstemon richardsonii*). The close observer in shady, forested, moist locations may be rewarded with the mysterious reddish brownish flowers of wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*), Dutchman's



Indian dream (*Aspidotus densa*) - an attractive fern species common to rocky areas in the Bald Mountain area. Photo by Mark Darrach - Umatilla N.F.

Nature Viewing - Wildflowers

breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) and calypso orchids (*Calypso bulbosa*). The experienced hiker will find the difficult trek to the bottom of Lookingglass Canyon offers a refuge for plants that thrive in moist settings including the lovely dark green foliage of the infrequently encountered male fern (*Dryopteris felix-mas*) and the delicate lacy foliage of oak fern (*Gymnocarpium disjunctum*). In addition twisted stalk (*Streptopus amplexifolius*) and two species of Solomon's seal (*Maianthemum* sp.) await the wildflower enthusiast. Numerous plants clinging to the near vertical rock walls include impressive displays of brook saxifrage (*Saxifraga odontoloma*) and lush carpets of various moss species.



Sulphur penstemon (*Penstemon attenuatus*) – one of several members of this showy genus present in the Bald Mountain area – Photo by Mark Darrach – Umatilla N.F.

Directions: Take Oregon highway 204 from near Weston and drive to the turnoff to the 64 road at Tollgate Work Center adjacent to Langdon Lake. Turn left to the northeast and proceed about 2.5 miles to the Bald Mountain overlook. The road is paved all the way to this location. You can park at the overlook and begin exploring or drive about 1 mile further to the north and park near the turnoff to FS road 6403 on your left. This is a good location to gain access to much of the area.

Ownership and Management: USDA Forest Service, Umatilla National Forest, Walla Walla Ranger District.

Closest town: Weston, Oregon



Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*) – the only member of this genus and family (*Fumariaceae*) known from the area, is a lovely delicate plant in moist shaded coniferous settings – Photo by Mark Darrach – Umatilla N.F.