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A COOPERATIVE PROJECT OF THE SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS AND THE EDUCATORS' ROUNDTABLE, PUBLISHED MONTHLY TO PROMOTE LEARNING AMONG YOUNG READERS IN NATURAL SCIENCE, HISTORY, TECHNOLOGY, AND ART

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This Month's Theme: Wildflower Hot Spots

California is known for its wildflower hot spots. If you visit these areas in springtime you can see many types of beautiful wildflowers. You will find different kinds of flowers growing along the coast, in the mountains, and in the desert regions of our state. Various environmental factors influence where each type of plant can grow. Soil type, the amount of precipitation (rain, snow, fog), temperatures, presence or absence of frost, and salt in the air and soil all affect the growth



of plants. Rare plants often grow in unusual soils like those that have developed from California's state rock, Serpentine.

Figueroa Mountain area



Spring in the Cuyama Valley

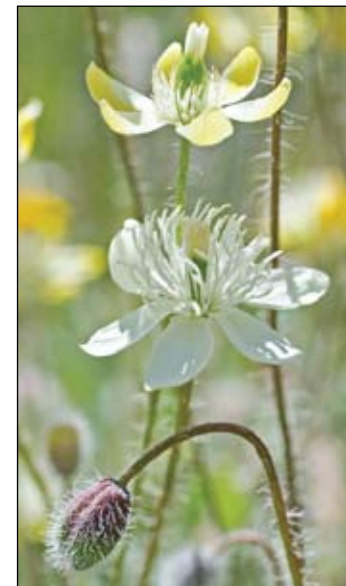
Plan a Spring Wildflower Trip with Your Family

In Santa Barbara County, the Figueroa Mountain area is a great place to see many different wildflowers. The Cuyama Valley in the eastern part of our county and the Carrizo Plain that stretches into San Luis Obispo County also have beautiful spring wildflowers. If you visit La Purisima Mission State Historic Park near Lompoc you can have a fun hike and you will see many beautiful flowers. Oso Flaco Lake, in the sand dunes near the mouth of the Santa

Maria River, as well as Jalama Beach and Surf Beach near Lompoc are good places to see coastal wildflowers. Drum Canyon Road near Los Alamos often has wonderful displays. You can hike on the Aliso Loop Trail that begins at Sage Hill Campground near Paradise Road and here you will see many flowers and butterflies.

Plan a day trip with your family to any of the locations mentioned here. Before you set out on a wildflower trip, find a map of the local area, and with a highlighter, mark your route to include one or two of these places. Bring some wildflower books and don't forget to pack a picnic lunch to enjoy with your family.

Be sure to bring a camera, a sketchbook, and some colored pencils or paints. You can take photos, draw some flowers, or make a landscape sketch. Some local artists specialize in wildflower drawings and paintings and they have learned how to show the fine details of flowers in their work.



Cream Cups



Poppies



Wild Rose



Lupine

Look for the Pollinators

While looking for wildflowers, look out for their pollinators also. Different types of pollinators visit different species of flowers. For example, red, tubular flowers that produce lots of nectar (like hummingbird sage) attract hummingbirds. White and pale yellow evening primroses open at dusk and attract night-flying moths. Look for butterflies, bees, flies, beetles, and hummingbirds as they visit flowers. Towards evening watch out for moths. Some plants depend on just one species of insect for pollination. If these particular insects are not present, the plants can not produce seeds. It is important that all of our pollinators remain healthy so that our native wildflowers can reproduce and survive into the future.

Remember that you should never pick wildflowers, and be very careful not to leave any litter. When you visit natural areas, you should leave only footsteps and take only photos.



Hummingbird Sage



Checkerspot Butterfly



Hummingbird



Swallowtail Butterfly


Visit The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

If you want to see many different California native wildflowers in a short space of time, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden is the place to go. Here you will find a huge collection of about 1,000 species of native plants from all around our state. In spring and summer, the Garden is alive with bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators, and so it is a wonderful place to learn about relationships between plants and animals.

Text and Photos by Sally Isaacson, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

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