

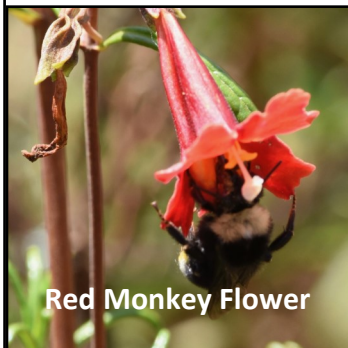
# Miracle March Wildflowers on Dictionary Hill

March 2020

Dictionary Hill Open Space Advocates

During March our resident botanist Jim Merzbacher carried out a detailed survey of the plant life on our hill. The exceptional winter rains have brought a remarkable abundance of plant species.

Few of us have a fully illustrated plant field guide, so we would like to briefly mention some conspicuous flowers seen on our hill this spring. We give minimal descriptions such



Red Monkey Flower

as general areas and flower colors.

We encourage people to use their smart phones to confirm a plant identification with iNat and google images.

Following are some of the wildflowers that have been seen recently on our nearby hills by botanists and DHOSA members. The peak blooming period for Dictionary Hill and surrounding area is expected in the latter half of March and early April. Currently bloom surges are on the increase. The last week of March has proven to be fruitful for naturally occurring additional species not seen before on or



Indian Paintbrush

around Dictionary Hill. Here is an informal list of some of the usual suspects and some new ones.

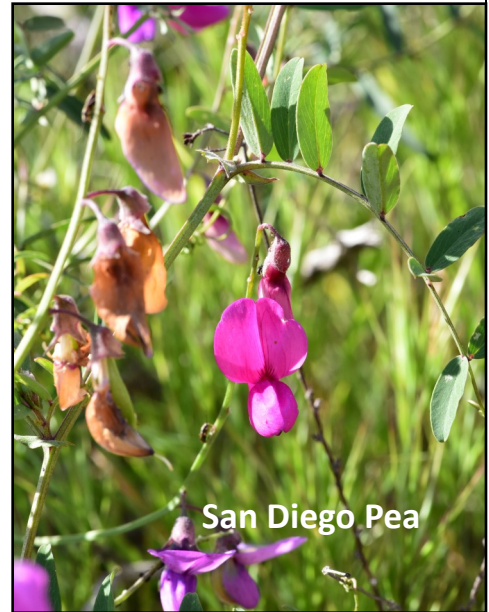


Variegated Dudleya

Let's begin with Hill 842, which is the eastern most hill above Bancroft Creek with the conspicuous Otay water tanks on its summit. This hill had an amazing native plant rebound after the damage of the 26 acre fire in 2016. This Point Fire began in Bancroft Creek. After our above average rainfall this spring it has a west facing swath of bright yellow Deerweed, covering several

acres. Deerweed is a noted fire follower. Recent March blooming species from Hill 842 are: (pink) California Pea, (indigo) Munz Sage, (cream white, syrupy smelling) California Everlasting, (inch high , tiny white) Everlasting Neststraw , (chest high magenta flowered) Chaparral Mallow (fire follower), (yellow flowered) Deerweed (fire follower), (pale yellow) Whispering Bells, (pale lavender) Caterpillar Phacelia, (deep purple) Parry's Phacelia, (pink/white) Fringed Linanthus. and numerous (white) Pop-cornflowers which has several species, the main one being the 10-15 inch high white flowered Clearwater Cryptantha with its scorpion-tail shaped flower head.

1060 ft high Dictionary Hill proper and the Bancroft Creek watershed have offered some interesting new flowers and plants that haven't been seen or have been missing for some years. On the western slopes the rare Variegated Dudleyas are now starting their bloom cycle, and although they are plump and abundant the flowers are late this year likely because of the cold wet weather. Its goliath sized cousin Chalk Dudleya, also in rock areas, is readying itself to bloom but is always late and will not have its tall red flowers until June. The big news for succulent lovers is the appearance of the Finger Tip Dudleyas, which are only slightly smaller than the Chalk Dudleyas. These beautiful ground covers were rediscovered only this March and confirmed from the 2003 surveys on some steep cliff faces that face Bancroft Creek near South Barcelona Ave entrance. The populations are holding steady and



San Diego Pea



California Poppy

quite healthy but viewing them safely is only possible with binoculars. Still to be seen but never previously observed in surveys of Dictionary Hill is the Lance Leaved Dudleya. This is common in Coastal and near Coastal San Diego. Hopefully intrepid but watchful hikers will see this distinctive succulent gem if it is hiding in the preserve or nearby.

One new flower seen in the same area as the FingerTip Dudleya was a cute little yellow wild native mustard called Dobie Pod. This is not to be confused with the invasive non-native Black Mustard which Ranger Newson has so diligently been eradicating. The Dobie Pod Mustard has never been seen or listed on Dictionary Hill before, so we're greatly encouraged that our DHOSA conservation efforts are bearing fruit. Nearby were (yellow/

gold) Royal Goldfields which is a little daisy more common in Baja, just as plants on Dictionary Hill are more common there. They are safe here because of our protected status and proximity to Northern Baja. The best example is the beautiful indigo colored flower of Munz Sage which comprises the dominant sage of our Hill's Elfin Forest, and is blooming everywhere at this time.

If you go to the Dictionary Hill Summit from Buena Vista Avenue or Hill 924, also known as Munz Plateau from San Bernadino Avenue, you should be able to see some of the following flowers. To the east of this summit and surrounding areas there are great displays of (red) Red Monkey Flowers and an orange variety, mostly on the Summit's north face, (cream color) Santa Barbara Vetch (vital for several blue butterflies and whites) , (pink) San Diego Pea, (yellow) Deerweed, (white) Popcornflowers, (yellow) Variegated Dudleyas, (indigo) Munz Sage, (pink) Fringed Linanthus, (pale lavender) Caterpillar Phacelia, (yellow) Strigose Lotus, (yellow) Golden Yarrow, (deep purple) Parry's Phacelia, (white /yellow center) Shooting Stars, (purple) Bludix, (purple) Parish's Night shade, (yellow/violet) Johnny Jump Up, (scarlet red) Indian Paintbrush, (magenta) Wishbone Plant, (red) Bee Flower, (yellow /green) Coastal Barrel Cactus, (magenta) Southern Checker Bloom Mallow and (red) Cholla. This Cholla is where you may spot our Coastal Cactus Wren, a bird emblematic of Dictionary Hill,

Shooting Stars peaked in January and February, as did (white) Wild Cucumber. Still to come in April are the (blue) Snapdragons and (yellow) Tarweeds, (bright pink) Centaury will follow along with (yellow) San Diego Goldenstars with its umbrella shaped flower clusters in the summer.



Caterpillar Phacelia

**Warning.** If are out and about identifying plants or just hiking on the hill, be aware of our rattlesnakes. They are starting to be active at this time of year.

If you are interested in learning more about our native plants, Jim Merzbacher recommends highly 'Plants of San Diego County' by James Lightner.

For more information you can contact Jim on [jjmerzer@yahoo.com](mailto:jjmerzer@yahoo.com)

Our monthly DHOSA meetings will resume as soon as we get the coronavirus all clear. We meet at 9:30 am on the third Saturday of the month at The Club House, Hatfield Park, 10050 Austin Drive.