Joshua Tree
Wildflower Report

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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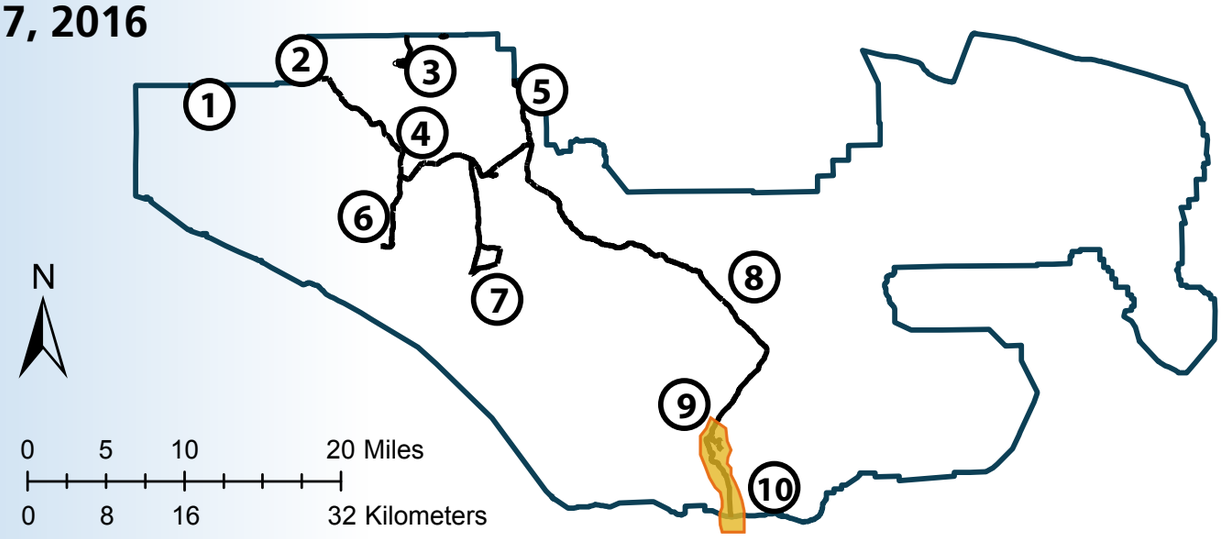

① Black Rock area ② West Entrance ③ Indian Cove ④ Wonderland of Rocks ⑤ North Entrance ⑥ Keys View ⑦ Geology Tour Rd ⑧ Pinto Basin ⑨ Cottonwood Spring ⑩ Bajada

Where are the wildflowers blooming?

This report offers weekly highlights on wildflower conditions for seven general regions within Joshua Tree National Park. For each region, we list the most charismatic blooms with pictures to aid in identification. Blooms listed for one region may be present in other regions as well—particularly the annual flowers.

This Week in the Park

The bloom has taken off in the north of the park. As seems typical with this year's spring wildflower display, diversity rather than quantity is the star of the show. If you're hiking, select a trail that covers a span of elevations and habitats and you're sure to find more species than you can count!

Big and Small

From so-called "belly flowers" smaller than a quarter, to the towering plumes of the Mojave yucca, this year's wildflowers are putting on a show.

Black Rock Area

A few spring annuals are just beginning to pop up at Black Rock. Look in the shady spaces under trees and the slopes on the edges of washes. So far, the majority are so-called "belly flowers"—you might have to lie down to get a good look.

Notch-leaf Phacelia
(Phacelia crenulata)
This plant has reddish stalks, deeply divided green leaves, and a curl of lilac-blue flowers. It is usually about one foot tall.

Mojave suncup
(Camissonia campestris)
These butter-yellow flowers can be identified by their button-like pistil.

Narrowleaf goldenbush
(Ericameria linearifolia)
The bright gold blooms of this perennial shrub have started in Black Rock!

Parish's larkspur
(Delphinium parishii)
Parish's larkspur has a tall inflorescence of beautiful purple flowers with spurs that contain nectar-producing petals.

Black Rock Area

Redstem filaree
(Erodium cicutarium)
This annual flower is a non-native species, and has spread across much of California.

Scale-bud
(Anisocoma acaulis)
This flower can be differentiated from desert dandelion and chicory by its smooth, scale-like phyllaries (bracts below the flowering head).

Indian Cove

Annual plants and perennial shrubs are in bloom at Indian Cove. Widespread scale-bud and desert dandelion form most of the ground cover.

Parish's poppy
(Eschscholzia parishii)
This poppy is larger than the little gold poppy, and lacks the dark central pigmentation of the Joshua Tree poppy.

Desert calico
(Loeseliastrum matthewsii)
Desert calico's spotted flowers and spiky vegetation can be spotted on the ground near Rattlesnake Canyon.

Beavertail cactus
(Opuntia basilaris)
These bright fuschia flowers jump out against the muted tones of the desert.

Apricot mallow
(Sphaeralcea ambigua)
Mallows are blooming across the park. Take caution with their foliage—it can irritate the skin.

Wonderland of Rocks

Photo (c) Philip Bouchard.

Desert bluebells
(Phacelia campanularia)
The bright indigo blue of these flowers jumps out against the russet tones of Joshua Tree's landscape.

Mojave aster
(Xylorhiza tortifolia)
This lilac to purple daisy can be found most easily on banks and sheltered slopes. It is a favorite of bees.

Woolly desert marigold
(Baileya pleniradiata)
This golden flower can be distinguished from the encelias by its densely wooly foliage and narrower, lobed leaves.

Mojave mound cactus
(Echinocereus mojavensis)
Bright red flowers are often bird-pollinated, as is the case for this cactus. It is the only hummingbird-pollinated cactus in the region.

Wonderland of Rocks

Keep an eye on the Joshua trees in this area—many are blooming. Annuals and shrubs are now blooming in earnest throughout the area.

Turpentine broom
(Thamnosma montana)
A medium-sized, glandular shrub with dark purple flowers. This plant is in the lemon family and smells strongly of citrus.

Fremont's phacelia
(Phacelia fremontii)
This phacelia is notable for the yellow centers of its flowers, which can be quite distinctive.

Scarlet milkvetch
(Astragalus coccineus)
It may resemble chuparosa, but this plant is an annual, and in a different family. The bright red flowers attract birds for pollination.

Spotted Locoweed
(Astragalus lentiginosus)
Locoweed has a similar structure to a lupine, but the leaves differ: the leaflets sprout from a linear axis, whereas a lupine's sprout from a single point.

Keys View Area/ Lost Horse Mine

Golden linanthus
(Leptosiphon aureus)
The delicate, spike-like leaves of the golden linanthus distinguish it from the yellow shooting star, whose flowers at first look similar.

Yellow blazingstar
(Mentzelia affinis)
The shimmer on the petals of blazingstars is a good identifying characteristic, as well as the many stamens at the center of the flower.

Beautiful rockcress
(Boechera pulchra)
These delicate inflorescences of bright magenta flowers are appearing across this area.

Ground-cherry
(Physalis crassifolia)
This plant is a close relative of the tomatillo. When in fruit, it looks strikingly similar, producing a berry surrounded by a papery envelope.

Pinto Basin

A widespread bloom of perennial shrubs continues in the Pinto Basin, including bladderpod *(Peritoma arborea)*, desert senna *(Senna armata)*, creosotebush *(Larrea tridentata)*, and desert lavender *(Hyptis emoryi)*.

Bladderpod
(NPS/Hannawacker)

Desert senna
(NPS/Ingersoll)

Creosote bush
(NPS/Ingersoll)

Desert lavender

Pinto Basin

The ocotillos in the Pinto Basin are going into bloom! The Ocotillo Patch plants are not yet blooming, but with a keen eye, you can spot the telltale flash of red blossoms on other ocotillos throughout the Pinto Basin and south toward Cottonwood Spring and beyond.

Ocotillo *(Fouquieria splendens)* full plant (left); detail of ocotillo buds (bottom left); and detail of ocotillo in bloom (bottom right).

Cottonwood Spring and Bajada

Perennial Shrubs

Brittlebush
(Encelia farinosa)
The leaves of this shrub are fair in color and feel fuzzy due to protective hairs on their surface. Before it flowers, brittlebush can have a domed appearance.

Chuparosa
(Justicia californica)
This shrub's tube-shaped red flowers are adapted for pollination by birds. It is much shorter and more densely branched than the ocotillo.

Bladderpod
(Peritoma arborea)
These bushes are in full bloom across the lower elevations. Look for anthers that extend far past the petals to positively identify bladderpod.

Cottonwood Spring and Bajada

Annual Plants and Cacti

Desert fivespot
(Eremalche rotundifolia)
Named for the markings at the base of its petals, this flower can appear as a pink globe in the afternoon light.

Ghostflower
(Mohavea confertifolia)
This plant is in the snapdragon family. Look closely for its bilateral symmetry.

Barrel cactus
(Ferocactus cylindraceus)
When in bloom, this cactus can appear to be wearing a crown of yellow blossoms.

Hedgehog cactus
(Echinocereus engelmannii)
The hedgehog cactus, when compared to the prickly pear cactus, has longer, tricolored spines and a cylindric shape.