



# W I L D F L O W E R S 2 0 1 1

*Every March we dedicate about a dozen pages to desert wildflowers. This year, we've added even more. By all means, enjoy our annual portfolio, but if you really want to see lupines and larkspurs, you'll need to go beyond the two dimensions of this magazine. You're not on your own, though. Along with the colorful photos you'll see inside, we offer 10 hikes that'll get you within smelling distance.*

*Photographs by* PAUL GILL & GEORGE STOCKING  
*Hikes by* JODI CISMAN





**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Because Mother Nature has a mind of her own, Arizona's wildflower season varies from year to year. Without winter rain, spring color can be hit or miss. At press time, we had no idea how much rain we'd get — if any — but by the time you read this, we'll have a much better idea. That's where our website comes in. For the latest information on where to find wildflowers, visit [www.arizonahighways.com/outdoors/wildflowers.asp](http://www.arizonahighways.com/outdoors/wildflowers.asp) or pick up your

smart phone and scan this code. If you haven't used 2D bar code technology, here's how to get started:

1. On your iPhone, download the application called Quickmark (for the Droid, download ScanLife).
2. Launch the application and position the barcode within the viewfinder on your phone — it'll automatically connect you to [www.arizonahighways.com/outdoors/wildflowers.asp](http://www.arizonahighways.com/outdoors/wildflowers.asp).



## HIKES to See Wildflowers

### BAJADA NATURE TRAIL |

*McDowell Sonoran Preserve*

The half-mile Bajada Nature Trail is a relaxing, easy path that's mostly level and quite broad. It takes about 30 minutes to hike the route, which is ideal for hikers of all ages, and it's wheelchair-accessible. The trail includes a self-guided interpretive walk with identification signs. In addition to wildflowers, many desert plants can be seen on the trail, including paloverde and mesquite trees, several varieties of cholla cactuses and saguaros. A free trail guide is available at the trailhead.

*Directions:* From Scottsdale, drive north on State Route 101 to the Pima Road exit (Exit 36) at Princess Drive and turn right. Drive north to Legacy Boulevard and turn east when you reach the dead end at Thompson Peak Parkway. Turn south and travel a half-mile to the gateway trailhead, which will be on the left.

*Information:* 480-998-7971 or [www.mcdowellsonoran.org](http://www.mcdowellsonoran.org)

**PRECEDING PANEL:** *Dewdrops clinging to a Mexican goldpoppy refract the image of a saguaro cactus.* | PAUL GILL

**ABOVE:** *At night or in cold, windy weather, the goldpoppy closes its leaves tightly.* | PAUL GILL

**RIGHT:** *Lupines and brittlebushes dominate the hillsides above Bartlett Lake.* | GEORGE STOCKING





A close-up, high-angle photograph of a dense field of bright orange flowers. The flowers have five petals and a prominent yellow center. They are interspersed with green, serrated leaves and thin, light-colored stems. The overall composition is a vibrant, textured mosaic of orange and green.

*“I cannot pretend to be impartial about colors. I rejoice with the brilliant ones,  
and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns.” – WINSTON CHURCHILL*





## HIKES

### *to See Wildflowers*

#### **CANYON LOOP TRAIL |**

*Catalina State Park*

Canyon Loop is a scenic, moderate hike along a well-marked trail. Hikers will spot not only cholla, prickly pear and saguaro cactuses, but also marigolds, poppies and lupines, all of which make an appearance after spring showers.

*Directions:* From Tucson, drive north on Oracle Road for approximately 13 miles to the park entrance on the right.

*Information:* 520-628-5798 or [www.azparks.gov/parks/cata](http://www.azparks.gov/parks/cata)

#### **FOUR PEAKS WILDERNESS**

**AREA |** *Tonto National Forest*

Four Peaks Wilderness Area, with its four mountain peaks rising more than 7,600 feet above sea level, is one of the most recognizable landmarks in Arizona. Because of the elevation, a variety of flowers come to life during peak seasons, including hedgehog, saguaro and prickly pear cactuses. The wilderness area offers multiple wildflower-abundant trails, including Cane Spring Trail 77, Soldier Camp Trail 83 and Brown's Trail 133. Another option is the Chillicut Trail on the east side of the range (see *Hike of the Month*, page 54).

*Directions:* From Mesa, drive north on State Route 87 for approximately 27 miles to Old Bush Highway. Turn right and continue north for approximately 5 miles to Forest Road 143. Travel 3 miles to a fork in the road, veer south on Forest Road 401 and follow the signs to the trailhead.

*Information:* 602-225-5200 or [www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto](http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto)



**PRECEDING PANEL:** *Desert globemallow spreads profusely on Black Mesa in the Mazatzal Mountains northeast of Phoenix.* | PAUL GILL

**ABOVE:** *White tackstem is a native Southwestern desert plant that blooms after plentiful winter rains.* | PAUL GILL

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** *Banana yuccas bloom under rain clouds in the Dragoon Mountains.* | GEORGE STOCKING





## HIKES to See Wildflowers

### HUNTER TRAIL | Picacho Peak State Park

A short, strenuous hike (4.2 miles round-trip) leads to the summit of this isolated desert peak, but along the way you'll be treated to blankets of poppies and bursts of blooming magenta hedgehog cactuses. Expect short, steep sections of trail that require hand-over-hand climbing aided by steel cables and handrails. When you arrive at the summit, you'll be rewarded with 360-degree views of the surrounding Sonoran Desert. Picacho Peak has been used as a navigational landmark for centuries, and it abounds with petroglyphs from the prehistoric Hohokam people.

*Directions:* From Phoenix, drive south on Interstate 10 to Picacho Peak Road (Exit 219), turn right and follow the signs to the state park entrance.

*Information:* 520-466-3183 or [www.azparks.gov/parks/pipe](http://www.azparks.gov/parks/pipe)

### RED ROCK STATE PARK | Sedona

Red Rock State Park offers a variety of trails and scenic drives that take you into wildflower country. Just a few of the flowers you'll spot along the trails are paintbrushes, penstemons, blackfoot daisies, larkspurs and Gooding's verbenas.

*Directions:* From Uptown Sedona, drive southwest on State Route 89A for 5.8 miles to lower Red Rock Loop Road, turn left and continue 3 miles to the entrance gate, which will be on the right.

*Information:* 928-282-6907 or [www.azparks.gov/parks/rero](http://www.azparks.gov/parks/rero)


*"Colors are the smiles of nature."* — LEIGH HUNT



ABOVE: *Sego lily blossoms in the Mazatzal Mountains.* | PAUL GILL

OPPOSITE PAGE: *Three sego lilies nestle down with their magenta-colored neighbors, strawberry hedgehog cactus blooms.* | PAUL GILL





*“I decided that if I could paint that flower in a huge scale,  
you could not ignore its beauty.”* — GEORGIA O’KEEFFE

*A purple nodding thistle pokes its way up through the blooms  
of a banana yucca in the Mazatzal Mountains. | PAUL GILL*





*Blue Coulter's lupines mix with Mexican goldpoppies and other cactuses on slopes near Superior, Arizona (above), and on a hillside at Gonzales Pass, west of Superior (right). | PAUL GILL*

## HIKES to See Wildflowers

### **SIPHON DRAW TRAIL** | *Lost Dutchman State Park*

This strenuous hike passes through Lost Dutchman State Park, then ventures into the more rugged Superstition Wilderness, where the once well-marked dirt path evolves into a rocky, less clearly defined trail. The scramble is worth it, though, especially as you arrive at a large stone basin. There, a seasonal waterfall marks the official end of the Siphon Draw Trail and makes a great place to take a breather among some of the season's prettiest blooms. *Directions:* From Phoenix, take

U.S. Route 60 east to Tomahawk Road, turn left and continue on Tomahawk Road for approximately 3.1 miles to State Route 88 (The Apache Trail). Turn right onto SR 88 and follow the signs to the park.

*Information:* 480-982-4485 or [www.azparks.gov/parks/lodu](http://www.azparks.gov/parks/lodu)

### **ROUND MOUNTAIN PARK** | *Globe*

Round Mountain Park near downtown Globe has five loop trails that range from easy to difficult. Along them, hikers can enjoy wallflowers, bladderpods, desert onions, sego lilies and

hedgehog cactuses. For fans of lupines or spurge, head for the Ice House Trail or Six Shooter Trail, both of which are located in the nearby Pinal Mountains.

*Directions:* In Globe, drive to the north end of South Street.

*Information:* 928-425-7146 or [www.globeaz.gov/departments/recreation/round-mountain-park](http://www.globeaz.gov/departments/recreation/round-mountain-park)

### **SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK EAST** | *Tucson*

To hit the mother lode of wildflowers, rangers of the Rincon district of Saguaro National Park East recommend taking the Cactus Forest Drive, which leads to

several hikes in the area. Along the trails, hikers will be dazzled by the fire-engine-red blossoms of ocotillos and the misty-pink blooms of fairydusters, as well as daisy-like brittlebush flowers. In addition, look for goldpoppies, bahias, filarees, zinnias, twist-flowers and wild hyacinth.

*Directions:* From Tucson, drive east on Broadway Boulevard to the Old Spanish Trail, turn right and follow the signs for approximately 6 miles to Saguaro National Park East. Cactus Forest Drive loops through the park. *Information:* 520-733-5153 or [www.nps.gov/sagu](http://www.nps.gov/sagu)









PRECEDING PANEL:  
Blue Coulter's lupines and Mexican goldpoppies, recurrent wildflower partners, near Superior.  
| PAUL GILL

RIGHT: An inchworm pays a visit to a sego lily in the Mazatzal Mountains. | PAUL GILL

LEFT: A patch of blooming brittlebushes overwhelms a teddy bear cholla near Bartlett Lake.  
| GEORGE STOCKING



*“The Amen of nature is always a flower.”* — OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

## HIKES to See Wildflowers

### THUMPER TRAIL | *Dead Horse Ranch State Park*

As you approach Dead Horse Ranch State Park in Cottonwood, you begin wondering whether or not you're in the right place. *Is this really a good spot to see wildflowers?* It is. The Verde River runs through the park and gives life to such beautiful blooms as golden smokes, freckled milkvetches, Parry's penstemons, desert marigolds and asters. The Thumper Trail is part of a 7-mile loop that winds around the state park. *Directions:* From Interstate 17, drive west on State Route 260 to

Main Street in Cottonwood (State Route 89A), turn left and continue through Cottonwood as the street gradually curves to the left. Turn right onto North 10th Street and follow the signs to the park. *Information:* 928-634-5283 or [www.azparks.gov/parks/deho](http://www.azparks.gov/parks/deho)

### WHYTES RETREAT TRAIL | *Cattail Cove State Park*

Cattail Cove State Park, which sits near Lake Havasu City, is an outdoors enthusiast's paradise, thanks to riverside fishing and camping. Visitors to the park can also enjoy wildflowers on the

Whytes Retreat Trail, which is an easy, 1.5-mile stretch along the shoreline of Lake Havasu. The McKinney Loop portion of the trail provides hikers with glimpses of purple scorpion weeds, yellow cups and Mexican goldpoppies. The beautiful blooming cactuses you'll see are courtesy of the volunteers who maintain a cactus garden at the park. *Directions:* From Lake Havasu City, drive north on State Route 95 to Lake Shore Boulevard, turn right and follow the signs to the park. *Information:* 928-855-1223 or [www.azparks.com/parks/caco](http://www.azparks.com/parks/caco) ■