

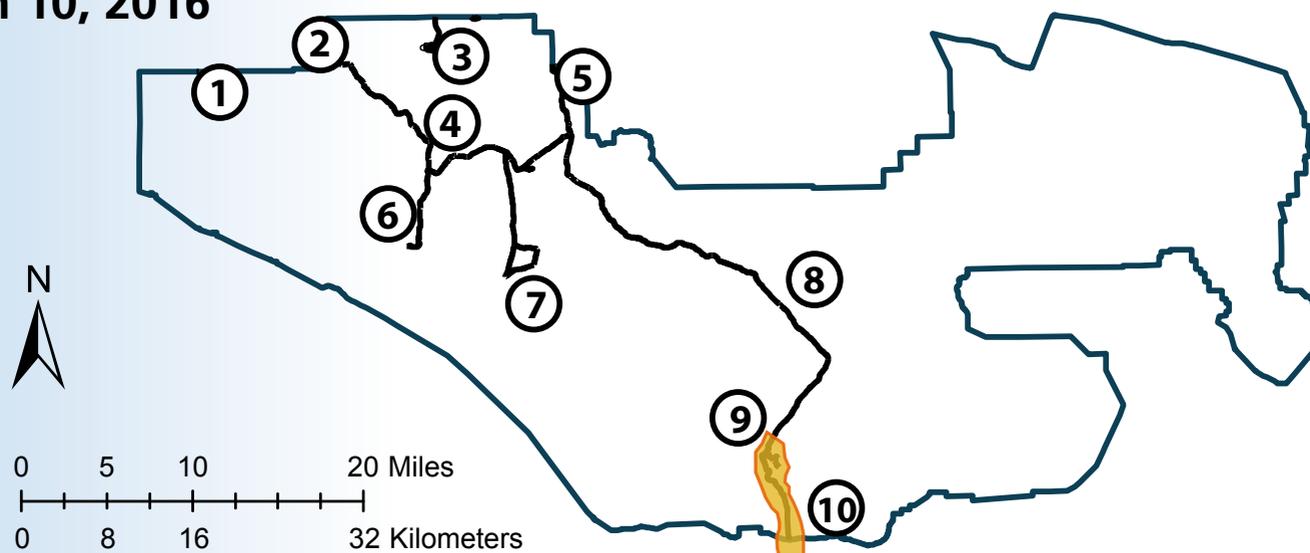
Joshua Tree

Wildflower Report

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



March 10, 2016



- 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.

Across the park...

Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) are beginning to bloom throughout the park. Scattered wildflowers are beginning to appear throughout the park, but **no widespread bloom events are occurring**. The stretch of road from the southern park boundary to the Cottonwood Visitor Center is currently the most impressive bloom event in the park (see map).



Joshua trees only bloom after they have been exposed to freezing temperatures—a key reason why they are no longer found at lower elevation locations, such as the Pinto Basin. Black Rock is an ideal location to view Joshua trees in bloom.

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.



Desert fiddleneck
(*Amsinckia tessellata*)

The small yellow flowers of this plant are arranged on an inflorescence that resembles a scroll. Its foliage is spiny.



Pale primrose
(*Cammisoniopsis pallida*)

The low rosette of grayish leaves and buttery yellow flowers of this primrose can be spotted on open ground between shrubs.



Whitedaisy tidytips
(*Layia glandulosa*)

This daisy-like plant has tiny black glands and a pleasant, spicy aroma. The notched tips of the petals give it a frilled appearance.

Indian Cove

As in Black Rock, it's still a bit early for flowers here, but you can spot a few if you look. The tiny flowers of jojoba and desert mistletoe can be seen, though—so for now, direct your eyes to the shrubs.



Jojoba

(Simmondsia chinensis)

The flowers of jojoba are small and green, and often tucked near the stem among its fleshy leaves.



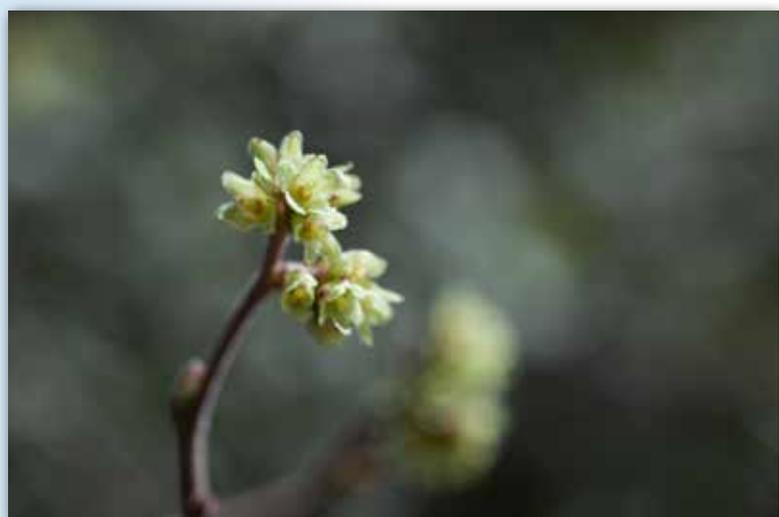
Desert mistletoe

(Phoradendron californicum)

A parasitic plant, desert mistletoe typically has a red appearance, but in the springtime can be green.

Wonderland of Rocks

The Barker Dam area is a good place to see riparian shrubs that are not easily found elsewhere in the park. Many of these shrubs are in bloom or fruiting, attracting birds and butterflies. Below, from top to bottom: **mule-fat** (*Baccharis salicifolia*), with a pen for scale; **bigberry manzanita** (*Arctostaphylos glauca*); and **fragrant sumac** (*Rhus aromatica*).



Wonderland of Rocks

Keep an eye on the Joshua trees in this area—many are about to bloom. A few annuals are starting to pop up, so watch for color on the ground.



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.

Geology Tour Road



Chia

(Salvia columbariae)

This annual has small and distinctive purple flowers arranged around its stem, and can appear in large numbers with adequate rainfall.



Desert starvine

(Brandegea bigelovii)

This climbing vine has star-shaped white flowers and one defining characteristic of the cucumber family: twining tendrils at the ends of its stalks.



Desert tobacco

(Nicotiana obtusifolia)

The aromatic leaves of this plant reveal its shared ancestry with commercial tobacco. Spot the similarities to the flowers of ground-cherry: the two are in the same family.



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

A small carpet of blooms has appeared south of the Cottonwood Visitor Center, just inside the park. Be sure to look for the Joshua Tree poppy, a new species described to science in 2014. The Joshua Tree poppy is listed as endangered due to its distribution, which is limited almost entirely to Joshua Tree National Park and nearby areas.



The Joshua Tree poppy is best identified by the dark spots at the base of the filaments (stalks which support the anthers). Look closely at the bottom photo to see these dark spots at the very center of the flower.



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



Browneyes (*Chylismia claviformis*)
This cheerful annual is popping up across the lower elevations. It is named for the brown receptacle at the center of its snow-white petals.



Desert dandelion
(*Malacothrix glabrata*)
The neon yellow of these flowers can be spotted among the poppies in this area.



Canterbury bells
(*Phacelia campanularia*)
This phacelia's flowers are large, bell-shaped, and distinctively cobalt blue to violet in color. Look for the lush rosette of fleshy leaves.



Cryptantha (*Cryptantha spp.*)
These annuals, known to some as catseye, are notoriously difficult to identify without their nutlets (seeds) present.