

# Typical Plants Along the Roads and Trails of Mesa Verde National Park

Flowering time of spring, summer, fall = Sp, Su, F

spp. = several species of that plant

NN = non-native

[Click for photographs of the species listed below.](#)

[Click for a complete list of the plants of Mesa Verde.](#)

## TREES (Trees that you are most likely to see are listed first.)

Scientific & Common Names	Family Names	Description
<i>Quercus gambelii</i> /Gambel's oak	Fagaceae/Oak	Dense clusters of trees to 15' tall; wavy-edged leaves; acorns; re-growing at Mesa Verde after fires. Sp, Su
<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> /Utah juniper	Cupressaceae/Cypress	Rounded shape to 30' tall; minute overlapping leaves; shredding bark; berry-like blue seed cone. Sp, Su
<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i> / Rocky Mountain Juniper	Cupressaceae/Cypress	Conical shape to 30' tall; blue-green foliage; tiny scale-like leaves; berry-like blue seed cone. Sp, Su
<i>Pinus edulis</i> /Pinyon pine	Pinaceae/Pine	Spreading shape to 30' tall; long, thin leaves; dark furrowed bark; 3" pine cone with edible seeds. Su
<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> /Douglas fir	Pinaceae/Pine	To 80' tall; leaves are short, thin, flat; thick dark gray bark; seed cone with tiny tails; many trees burned. Su
<i>Prunus virginiana</i> /Chokecherry	Rosaceae/Rose	To 15' tall; numerous, showy, 3" long cylinders of sweet flowers; juicy red-black berries. Sp
<i>Populus deltoides</i> /Cottonwood	Salicaceae/Willow	To 40' tall, wide crown-spread; triangular fluttering leaves; fluffy cotton carries seeds; always near water. Sp
<i>Pinus ponderosa</i> /Ponderosa pine	Pinaceae/Pine	To 60' tall; deeply layered cinnamon bark; 4" seed cones; few trees left, most burned. Su

## GRASSES

Scientific & Common Names	Family Names	Description
<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i> /Indian ricegrass	Poaceae/ Grass	Wiry bunch grass with rolled leaves; wide-spreading loose panicle. Su, F
<i>Bromus tectorum</i> /Cheatgrass	Poaceae/ Grass	NN. Worst weed in West and Mesa Verde; crowds out native plants; green in Sp & F; 6-8 inches tall. Sp
<i>Elymus elymoides</i> /Squirreltail bottle brush	Poaceae/ Grass	Long and spreading awns giving the appearance of a squirrel's tail. Sp
<i>Hesperostipa comata</i> /Needle-and-thread grass	Poaceae/ Grass	Tall bunch grass to 4'; long and twisting awns. Sp, Su
<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i> /Western Wheatgrass	Poaceae/ Grass	Bluish green leaves; narrow spike. Sp
<i>Poa fendleriana</i> /Muttongrass	Poaceae/ Grass	Folded leaves; dense panicle; common under Pinyon-Juniper canopy. Sp

## SHRUBS (Shrubs that you are most likely to see are listed first.)

Scientific & Common Names	Family Names	Description
<i>Artemisia tridentata</i> /Sagebrush	Asteraceae/Sunflower	To 8' tall and wide; ragged appearance; aromatic 1" leaves often 3-lobed; minute yellow flowers. F
<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i> /Rabbitbrush	Asteraceae/Sunflower	6' tall & wide; young stems white; 1-2" long narrow leaves; covered with golden flowers & white seeds. F
<i>Purshia tridentata</i> /Bitterbrush	Rosaceae/Rose	To 3' tall & 6' wide; short, narrow leaves with 3 lobes at tip; covered in 1" very sweet white flowers. Sp
<i>Amelanchier utahensis</i> /Serviceberry	Rosaceae/Rose	8' tall & wide; gray/purple stems; serrated 1" leaves; many flowers with 5 narrow petals; blue fruit. Sp
<i>Fendlera rupicola</i> /Cliff Fendler bush	Hydrangeaceae/Hydrangea	8' tall; streaked stems; 1" leaves narrow, bundled; pink buds; 4-petaled tapered white 2" flowers. Sp, Su
<i>Symphoricarpos rotundifolius</i> /Snowberry	Caprifoliaceae/Honeysuckle	5'x5'; arching stems; leaves elliptical, variable; narrow, drooping pink/white flowers; white berries. Su
<i>Cercocarpus montanus</i> /Mountain mahogany	Rosaceae/Rose	8'x8'; gray stems; 1" serrated leaves; red/yellow tiny trumpet flowers; feathery tails on seeds. Sp
<i>Paxistima myrsinites</i> /Mountain lover	Celastraceae/Staff-tree	Low spreading shrub in shade; leathery 1" shinny leaves; minute red flowers. Sp, Su
<i>Toxicodendron rydbergii</i> /Poison ivy	Anacardiaceae/Sumac	Toxic. Colonies 4' tall; notched leaves in threes; minute yellow/green flowers; white fruits. Sp, Su

\*Thanks to Al Schneider of [www.swcoloradowildflower.com](http://www.swcoloradowildflower.com) for creating Mesa Verde National Park's Common Plant Species list.

## Wildflowers by Color

Wildflowers are listed alphabetically.

If you are looking for a white, pink, or blue wildflower, be sure to look in all three color sections below.

### BLUE, PURPLE WILDFLOWERS

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Scientific & Common Names	Family Names	Description
<i>Astragalus</i> spp./Milkvetch	Fabaceae/Pea	Many species; matted, sprawling, or erect; leaves cut into leaflets; blue, pink, or white flowers. Sp, Su
<i>Clematis hirsutissima</i> /Sugarbowls	Ranunculaceae/Buttercup	16" tall; leaves cut into 3 leaflets; inverted hairy deep purple flowers; fluffy seed head. Sp, Su
<i>Delphinium nuttallianum</i> /Dwarf larkspur	Ranunculaceae/Buttercup	To 12" tall; spurred flowers in elongated cluster above finely cut leaves. Su
<i>Dieteria bigelovii</i> /Tansy aster	Asteraceae/Sunflower	To 3' tall, slender; 1-2" narrow leaves; numerous 1" flowerheads. Sp, Su, mostly F
<i>Lupinus</i> spp. /Lupine	Fabaceae/Pea	Several species, short with few tiny flowers and tall with long stems of flowers; leaves divided. Sp, Su
<i>Penstemon linarioides</i> /Low penstemon	Plantaginaceae/Plantain	12" wide mound; 1" long narrow leaves; many 6" vertical stems with numerous pale blue/white flowers. Su
<i>Penstemon strictus</i> /Rocky mtn. penstemon	Plantaginaceae/Plantain	To 3' tall; clusters of stems; narrow leaves 3" long ; showy tubular flowers with wide mouths. Su
<i>Symphotrichum ascendens</i> /Western aster	Asteraceae/Sunflower	Several similar pecies; 6-14" tall; leaves longer than wide; showy 1" flowerheads at top of stem. Su, F

### RED, PINK, ORANGE WILDFLOWERS

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Scientific & Common Names	Family Names	Description
<i>Allium acuminatum</i> /Purple onion	Amaryllidaceae/Amaryllis	To 7" tall in large spreading colonies; thin cylindrical leaves from base; pink-purple flowers. Su
<i>Carduus nutans</i> /Musk thistle	Asteraceae/Sunflower	NN. 4-6' tall; very spiny leaves; often nodding maroon-pink 2" flowerhead. Su, F
<i>Castilleja linariifolia</i> /Wyoming paintbrush	Orobanchaceae/ Broomrape	Wyoming state flower; 3' tall; red leaves look like flowers; inconspicuous green tubular flowers. Su, F
<i>Cirsium arizonicum</i> /Arizona thistle	Asteraceae/Sunflower	Native thistle to 4' tall; spiny leaves are lobed or entire; red flowerheads cylindrical at top of plant . Su
<i>Echinocereus triglochidiatus</i> /Claret cup cactus	Cactus/ Cactaceae	To 10" tall; many barrel-like 2-3" wide spiny stems; very showy red funnel-shaped flowers. Sp, Su
<i>Erigeron speciosus</i> /Showy daisy	Asteraceae/Sunflower	To 20" tall; clusters of stems; 3" smooth leaves; many showy pink flowerheads. Su
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i> /Filaree	Geraniaceae/Geranium	NN. Fern-like leaves radiate from central point on ground; 1/4" pink flowers; stork's bill seed pod. Sp, Su, F
<i>Hedysarum boreale</i> /Utah sweetvetch	Fabaceae/Pea	To 15" tall in loose clumps; leaves cut into small leaflets; many stems of showy red flowers. Su
<i>Herrickia glauca</i> /Waxy aster	Asteraceae/Sunflower	To 3' tall; masses of plants; distinctive waxy blue-green leaves; few narrow pink ray flowers. Su
<i>Ipomopsis aggregata</i> /Scarlet gilia	Polemoniaceae/Phlox	To 3' tall; very slender; lacey basal leaves, few stem leaves; bright red 1 1/4" trumpet flowers. Su, F
<i>Lathyrus eucosmos</i> & <i>L. pauciflorus</i> /Peavines	Fabaceae/Pea	Vines often in shrubs; leaves divided into leaflets; 1"+ showy pink flowers. Sp, Su
<i>Penstemon barbatus</i> /Scarlet bugler	Plantaginaceae/Plantain	To 4' tall; 3" long narrow horizontal leaves; showy tubular red flowers. Su
<i>Penstemon eatoni</i> /Eaton's penstemon	Plantaginaceae/Plantain	To 3' tall; triangular leaves clasp stem; showy tubular red flowers. Sp
<i>Rosa woodsii</i> /Wild rose	Rosaceae/Rose	2-7' tall; thick clusters of stems or more often scattered single stems; thorny; 2" showy pink flowers; Su
<i>Sphaeralcea coccinea</i> /Scarlet globemallow	Malvaceae/Mallow	To 10" tall; spreading colonies; leaves deeply divided & silvery; bright orange 1" flowers. Su, F
<i>Sphaeralcea parvifolia</i> /Globemallow	Malvaceae/Mallow	To 2' tall; bushy; triangular rough-surfaced leaves; bright orange flowers. Su

## WHITE WILDFLOWERS

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### Scientific & Common Names

*Achillea millefolium* /Yarrow  
*Antennaria* spp./Pussytoes  
*Astragalus pattersonii*/Patterson's milkvetch  
*Astragalus schmolliae* /Chapin Mesa milkvetch  
*Calochortus nuttallii*/Sego lily  
*Cirsium undulatum* /Wavyleaf thistle  
*Clematis ligusticifolia* /Virgin's bower  
*Convolvulus arvensis* /Bindweed  
*Erigeron* spp./Fleabane  
*Lepidium* spp./Peppergrass  
*Oenothera caespitosa* /Evening primrose  
*Phlox canescens* /Gray phlox  
*Symphyotrichum ericoides* /Fall aster  
*Toxicoscordion venosum* /Death camas  
*Yucca baccata* /Broadleaf yucca

### Family Names

Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Fabaceae/Pea  
Fabaceae/Pea  
Liliaceae/Lily  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Ranunculaceae/Buttercup  
Convolvulaceae/Morning Glory  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Brassicaceae/Mustard  
Onagraceae/Evening Primrose  
Polemoniaceae/Phlox  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Melanthiaceae/False Hellebore  
Asparagaceae/Asparagus

### Description

Very wide-spread, long lasting; to 18" tall; mat of fern-like, odoriferous leaves; 1" flowerheads. Su, F  
Mat of small leaves; flowerheads clustered like cat's paw; stems 1/2-7" tall; white fluff carries seeds. Su  
18" tall; leaves cut into small leaflets; red stems with many 3/4" bright white, fringed flowers. Sp, Su  
Endemic. To 30" tall; leaves cut into small leaflets; elongated stems of many green/white flower. Su  
Utah state flower; 10" tall; few long grass-like leaves; large tulip-like flowers. Sp, Su  
Native. To 3' tall; spiny, wavy-edged leaves; several similar species with white or pink flowers. Su  
Vine; many tiny flowers followed by masses of very noticeable white fluff that carries seeds. Sp, Su  
NN. Crawling, spreading often at roadside; 1" white/pink flowers. Sp, Su, F  
Several species; 3-16" tall; numerous ray & disk flowers in 1/2-1" diameter flowerheads. Sp, Su, F  
Several species; 1-3' tall; leaves lobed and/or entire; clusters of tiny flowers. Sp, Su  
Basal cluster of long, narrow lobed leaves; 4" showy ground-hugging flowers. Su  
Dense low mat of tiny, sharp leaves covered in sweet smelling flowers. Sp  
To 20" tall; leaves tiny to 1" long; many clusters of 1/2" flowerheads along stems. F  
Upright long narrow leaves from base; vertical cluster of 3/4" flowers on 10" stem. Su, F  
3' long, thick, sword-like leaves from central point; dense cluster of large, waxy flowers. Su

## YELLOW WILDFLOWERS

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### Scientific & Common Names

*Balsamorhiza sagittata* /Arrowhead balsamroot  
*Crepis* spp./Hawksbeard  
*Eriogonum alatum* /Winged buckwheat  
*Eriogonum umbellatum* /Sulfur flower  
*Gutierrezia sarothrae* /Snakeweed  
*Heliomeris multiflora* /Showy golden eye  
*Heterotheca villosa* /Hairy Golden aster  
*Heuchera parvifolia* /Alumroot  
*Hymenopappus filifolius* /Fine-leaf sunflower  
*Lomatium triternatum* /Biscuitroot  
*Mahonia repens* /Oregon grape  
*Melilotus officinalis* /Sweet clover  
*Opuntia polyacantha* & *O. phaeacantha* /Pricklypear  
*Packera neomexicana* /New Mexico sunflower  
*Petroradia pumila* /Rock goldenrod  
*Physaria acutifolia* /Double Bladderpod  
*Sisymbrium linifolium* /Flaxleaf mustard  
*Solidago* spp./Goldenrod  
*Taraxacum officinalis* /Dandelion  
*Tetranuris ivesiana* /Perky Sue  
*Tragopogon dubius* /Salsify  
*Verbascum thapsus* /Mullein  
*Wyethia arizonica* /Mule's ears

### Family Name

Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Polygonaceae/Buckwheat  
Polygonaceae/Buckwheat  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Saxifragaceae/Saxifrage  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Apiaceae/Parsley  
Berberidaceae/Barberry  
Fabaceae/ Pea  
Cactaceae/Cactus  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Brassicaceae/Mustard  
Brassicaceae/Mustard  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Asteraceae/Sunflower  
Scrophulariaceae/Figwort  
Asteraceae/Sunflower

### Description

To 2' tall; clumps of large arrowhead-shaped leaves; 3" flowerheads. Sp, Su  
5-16" tall; saw-tooth edged, sage green leaves; numerous 1/2" flowerheads. Sp, Su  
Very slender brown stem to 4'; basal leaves 3-5" long, green (some red); minute flowers. Su  
12" diameter tuft of small green/red leaves; long-blooming clusters of flowers. Su, F  
Very widespread; to 30" tall & wide; thin stems; short, narrow leaves; myriad of minute flowers. Su, F  
2' tall; several stems; olive-drab 2" leaves; long lasting 1" flowerheads. Su, F  
Lines roads. 18" wide & tall mounds of sage-green leaves; many 1" flowers; white fluff carries seeds. Su, F  
Basal leaves round, scalloped, 1" wide; 17" tall leafless flower stem sways; tiny pale flowers. Sp, Su  
To 18" tall; mound of basal leaves cut into very fine divisions; small clusters of tiny flowers. Su  
Slender; to 9" tall; leaves cut in 3 linear sections; flower cluster spreads widely with age. Sp, Su  
Thick holly-like leaves; numerous tiny 1/8" flowers; often under Oaks. Sp, Su  
NN. 2-7' tall; several stems; roadsides, disturbed areas; small leaflets; flowers yellow or white. Su, F  
Circular flattened thick stems with spines; spreads along ground; large yellow or pink flowers. Su  
12" tall; common; many tiny flowers atop multiple stems above mass of 1" basal leaves. Sp, Su, F  
Tight group 8" vertical stems; 3" bright green vertical leaves; dead leaves at base; mass of tiny flowers. Su  
3" disk of sage green paddle-shaped leaves low to the ground; numerous bright small flowers. Early Sp  
Very slender 2' tall; few narrow leaves; tiny sweet smelling flowers at top of swaying stems. Sp, Su  
Several species; from 6-24" tall; clusters of tiny flowers at top of stem. Su, F  
NN. Widespread. Lobed basal leaves; 6" hollow flower stems with 1" flowers. Sp, Su, F  
16" almost leafless stems topped by bright 1" flowers; 3" basal leaves long upright narrow. Sp, Su, F  
NN. 14" tall; several long narrow upright leaves; 1" flower produces 2" diameter silky seed head. Sp, Su, F  
NN. To 5' tall; huge very hairy soft leaves; long flower head, few open small flowers in long spikes. Su, F  
Plants to 30" tall & wide; basal clumps of upright 9" long mule's-ear-shaped leaves; showy 3" flowers. Sp, Su